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Tuesday, 23 August 2005, 10 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Oshima	(Japan)
Members:	Algeria	Mr. Benmehidi
	Argentina	Mr. Mayoral
	Benin	Mr. Zinsou
	Brazil	Mr. Sardenberg
	China	Mr. Zhang Yishan
	Denmark	Mr. Faaborg-Andersen
	France	Mr. Duclos
	Greece	Mr. Vassilakis
	Philippines	Mr. Baja
	Romania	Mr. Motoc
	Russian Federation	Mr. Denisov
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Emyr Jones Parry
	United Republic of Tanzania	Mr. Mahiga
	United States of America	Mr. Bolton

Agenda

The situation in Afghanistan

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security (S/2005/525)

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05-46886 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Afghanistan

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security (S/2005/525)

The President: It is good to see Council colleagues back in New York, looking happy and fully recharged.

I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Afghanistan, Canada, Germany, India, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Italy, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Republic of Korea, Spain and Turkey, in which they request to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the discussion, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Farhâdi (Afghanistan) took a seat at the Council table; the representatives of the other aforementioned countries took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President: In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Jean Arnault, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan.

It is so decided.

I invite Mr. Arnault to take a seat at the Council table.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2005/525, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear a briefing by Mr. Jean Arnault, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan. I now give him the floor.

Mr. Arnault: Thank you for this new opportunity to brief the Council on the situation in Afghanistan. Members have before them the report of the Secretary-General (S/2005/525), which describes developments since March 2005 and also attempts to provide a preliminary assessment of the implementation of the Bonn Agreement so far. With a little more than three weeks' time before polling day, let me begin by providing the Council with an update on the election preparations and a number of related developments.

The electoral campaign was officially launched last week, on 17 August, and candidates have begun canvassing support throughout the country with posters, rallies and media announcements. The campaign period is governed by the electoral law and regulations from the Joint Electoral Management Body (JEMB), which protect freedom of speech and freedom of assembly but also place restrictions on speeches and materials that incite violence or religious or ethnic hatred. The campaign is monitored by international observers from the European Union and by other international and Afghan electoral observers. For their part, the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) will continue to verify the exercise of political rights by candidates and citizens throughout the period.

Providing a level playing field for candidates has been a permanent concern since last year's presidential election and is a particularly difficult undertaking this year in a competition involving 5,800 candidates. The completion of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) has helped, and so has the disqualification of a number of candidates with linkages to armed groups. The latest report of the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission and UNAMA shows improvement with regard to the conduct of Government officials but also a lingering fear of intimidation among the citizenry.

A sponsored advertisement programme is being implemented through the newly reconvened Media Commission; it provides candidates with free and equal access to pre-approved radio and television outlets. In addition, candidates have received information packages from the JEMB secretariat to assist them in understanding their campaign rights. For civic education purposes, 1 million sample ballots have been produced in the format of the actual ballot. They will allow voters throughout the country to familiarize themselves with what is often a very crowded ballot, with up to 300-plus names in Kabul province.

The final preparations for polling day are ongoing. Some 40 million ballots for the 69 different elections have been produced and are ready for distribution throughout the country. So far, the ballots of 11 provinces have been delivered, and the rest will reach the provincial offices by 2 September. Contingency plans are in place, with enough surplus materials to address any shortages at the polling stations.

The JEMB secretariat is in the process of recruiting more than 160,000 polling station officials, many of whom are being selected from the pool of staff that worked during the presidential election last year. The training of 130 trainers was just completed two days ago in Kabul. Cascade training will now be implemented for more than 6,000 district field coordinators, who in turn will train polling station officials. In order to ensure equitable access by various minority groups, the recruitment and training account specifically for women, nomads and disabled groups.

The secretariat of the JEMB has been working with national and international security bodies to establish the final security and force deployment plan for polling day. With more than 6,300 polling centres identified, some 30,000 members of the Afghan National Police will be required to secure the first ring around polling sites, counting centres and JEMB compounds and to allow for a quick-reaction force. An international military force surge capacity has arrived in Afghanistan with contingents from Spain, Romania, the Netherlands and the United States and will be deployed as a backup to national forces.

In that respect, I would like to pay a special tribute to the 17 soldiers of the Spanish contingent who died in a helicopter accident on 16 August and also to express our gratitude to the Spanish Government, which is sending new troops and aircraft in order to secure the electoral process.

The day-to-day management of field operations and security coordination is taking place in the Joint Electoral Operations Centre, which commenced operations last week, with the participation of the Ministries of Defence and the Interior, the national security directorate, the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and the coalition forces.

I would now like to provide the Council with a preview of key electoral events that will take place immediately after polling day.

On 20 September, the JEMB will begin the counting of ballots, which is expected to be completed by 4 October, before the start of Ramadan. Dedicated counting centres have been identified in the provincial centres; they provide better security conditions and allow for a broad presence of international and domestic observers. The JEMB transport plan will ensure that the transfer of ballots from the polling places to the counting centres is protected in the best possible manner from manipulation and fraud. Partial results will be announced by province on a rolling basis as the counting progresses.

It is expected that provisional results for all provinces will have been declared by 4 October. That will be followed by a two-week period during which complaints relating to the process and the provisional results will be adjudicated by the Electoral Complaints Commission. Final results of the elections for the Wolesi Jirga and the provincial councils should be certified towards the end of October.

Following this certification, most likely in the first half of November, each provincial council will, in turn, elect its representative to the upper house. This will be done by secret ballot on a single day throughout the country. The President will also have to appoint 17 members of the upper house based upon nominations from social organizations, political parties and the general public. The timetable that I have just outlined would culminate with the inauguration of the new National Assembly before the end of the year.

In anticipation of the first meetings of the National Assembly, the recruitment and training of 120 staff of the National Assembly secretariat has been completed and the staff have been placed at foreign parliaments in Italy, Sri Lanka, India, Indonesia,

Turkey, Morocco, Australia, the Netherlands, Germany and France.

With regard to provincial councils, last week the Government adopted the legislation that grants the councils an essentially advisory role in relation to the provincial administration, including with regard to Government expenditure in the provinces.

I should like to take this opportunity to brief the Council on an important and necessary adjustment to the earlier indicative electoral budget. In the past few days, the JEMB secretariat, in consultation with us, has stated that the originally projected resource requirements of $149 million had to be revised to $159 million. That increase of $10 million is largely attributable to an increase in polling and counting costs due to higher ballot production and transportation requirements. After various ballot designs were tested to ensure their suitability for an electorate with a very low literacy rate, the option eventually adopted was a large tabloid-like ballot, with up to seven pages in the case of Kabul province. That, in turn, implied highly complex and expensive ballot printing requirements; the format and size of the ballots also require much larger ballot boxes than those used in 2004. Finally, the sheer weight and volume of those supplies has resulted in a tenfold increase in requirements in terms of transportation and distribution. I should be grateful if the Security Council would join us in urgently requesting the international community to fill the funding gap, which now stands at $29.6 million.

The report of the Secretary-General (S/2005/525) addresses in detail our concerns regarding the deteriorating security situation in the months of June and July — a topic that I also emphasized in my briefing on 24 June (see S/PV.5215). Those concerns have not abated since the report was completed. Indeed, quite the contrary: after a drop in the number of incidents in late July and early August, attacks have resumed with increased intensity in the south, south-east and east, with ambushes and the use of improvised explosive devices remaining the tactics of choice of the extremists. In recent days, a large number of improvised explosive devices have been laid in Kandahar city. In a serious incident on 17 August, an Afghan National Police (ANP) bus was targeted, leaving one ANP officer dead and 11 wounded. Fighting between anti-Government elements and national and international military forces also continues to result in high casualties.

Attacks against community leaders — a phenomenon that was not present last year — have also resumed, and the killing of two moderate pro-Government mullahs last week brings to at least eight the number of clerics who have been killed.

Against that background, the number of attacks against United Nations staff has decreased compared with last year, and those targeting the electoral process — attacks against candidates and electoral workers — have been, in the main, indirect rather than direct. That may indicate that extremists, perhaps wiser after last year's experience with the presidential election, have decided to target pro-Government and international forces rather than to try to stop the parliamentary elections. However, it is too soon to rule out attempts to cause major disruptions of the election before, during or after polling day. In addition, increased insecurity in the provinces along the eastern border is, in itself, a cause for concern for the elections in those areas. In the report, published yesterday, of their findings concerning the exercise of political rights in the past couple of months, the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission and UNAMA noted:

> "Despite the fact that extremists have failed to derail the process or pressure candidates to withdraw, the possibility exists that the threat of violent attacks will have an impact on the campaign process and on election day, potentially disenfranchising parts of the Pashtun population".

Those developments on the security front are a reminder of the hurdles that Afghans face in rebuilding their country. Nevertheless, we are confident that, by the end of this year, a representative new National Assembly will be established and that, with it, the Bonn process will be successfully completed. Looking back, as the report of the Secretary-General does, to the successive stages of the political transition since 2001, this is, indeed, a remarkable achievement. It illustrates that, against the odds — with failed institutions, high levels of militarization and violent extremism — calling upon people to participate, through traditional mechanisms or modern ones, in reshaping their society is, indeed, a very powerful tool. It is not only giving Afghanistan legitimate institutions; it also serves to drive the process of disarmament, the retooling of security agencies, the creation of political parties, new legislation on media and administrative structures and, more important, the emergence of a culture of political pluralism that

rejects the use of violence in the search for political office. This democratic approach is also generating new popular expectations vis-à-vis the Government and elected officials, and more demanding criteria by which they will be judged.

That democratic approach is thus also shaping, to a large extent, the contents of the post-Bonn agenda. Security is paramount, and bringing extremist violence and other forms of insecurity under control will remain at the top of the agenda for the Government and for millions of Afghans for whom the most basic dividend of peace — security — remains a distant goal, even as the Bonn process draws to a close. The strengthening of key State institutions — police, justice and civilian administration — will have to catch up with the progress that has been made in the creation of the Afghan National Army and will have to become tangible where it is most needed: at local level. What has been so far an array of reconstruction interventions will have to come together into a comprehensive development strategy that can maximize the use of Afghanistan's economic assets and create a reliable revenue base for the State. Finally, steady progress in the elimination of the narcotics industry will remain a key goal on which progress in so many other areas is predicated.

We are encouraged to see that the international community appears committed to working with the Government of Afghanistan towards an extended compact around some key benchmarks and timelines for the achievement of the objectives to which I have referred. In the next phase, international financial, technical and security resources will remain indispensable complements to the Afghan State's own political will and fiscal effort. In this respect, the Government of Afghanistan has approached UNAMA and other international partners with the proposal that a high-level conference on the post-Bonn compact be held during the second half of January, shortly after the anticipated inauguration of the National Assembly, which should be adequately involved in that process.

In the meantime, we are particularly keen to see closer links between Afghanistan and its neighbours in all fields, including security cooperation, trade, development and counter-narcotics. We believe that the proposed conference could play an important role in that respect. As a landlocked country, Afghanistan's long-term stability and the sustainability of its development are inextricably linked to the stability and the prosperity of the region at large.

For his part, immediately after the election, the Secretary-General will initiate consultations with President Karzai and the Government of Afghanistan, as well as with other concerned stakeholders, with a view to defining the role of the United Nations in the post-Bonn period.

The President: I thank Mr. Arnault for his briefing.

Before opening the floor, I wish to request all participants to limit their statements to no more than five minutes in order to enable the Council to work efficiently within its timetable. I thank participants for their understanding and cooperation.

Mr. Sardenberg (Brazil): I wish to thank Special Representative Jean Arnault for his invaluable briefing on the situation in Afghanistan and on the preparations for the upcoming elections.

In January 2004, when Brazil was starting its present term in the Security Council, Afghanistan was completing an important initial step on its way to reconstruction and normalcy with the adoption of its Constitution approved by the Loya Jirga.

Since then, with international assistance, the country has progressed steadily in rebuilding its institutions, in repairing its infrastructure, in promoting disarmament and reconciliation and in empowering its own society, finally, to assume the entire responsibility for its destiny as a nation. The peaceful holding of the presidential election last year made clear Afghans' attachment to the democratic process and their determination to leave behind decades of war and destruction and inaugurate a new era of peace and development.

During this time, Brazil has had the opportunity in the Council to support the achievements towards fulfilling the Bonn agenda and, in particular, to support the international community's strong resolve to carry out the process in a free and peaceful environment.

Since the last time the Security Council discussed the situation in Afghanistan, much progress has been made in preparation for the upcoming legislative elections to be held on 18 September, which will mark the completion of the Bonn process. The report of the Secretary-General (S/2005/525) indicates that technical preparations for the voting are on schedule; that is evidence of keen interest and confidence in the political process. This morning, Mr. Arnault added new

information to the Secretary-General's report, and we thank him for that.

Nevertheless, the already daunting obstacles to the electoral process have become even more significant in recent weeks. A relentless war is being waged, aimed not only at derailing the electoral process, but also at eroding the legitimacy of Afghan institutions and thwarting the broader effort by the international community to ensure the reconstruction of the country. Meanwhile, the wave of violence in Afghanistan is estimated to have taken more than 1,000 lives since last March.

Military insecurity is compounded by many alleged cases of intimidation against candidates, especially women, but no candidates have so far resorted to the protection provided by the system for complaints put in place by the Joint Electoral Management Body, which probably points to the need to improve that system.

In this context, I stress once again the paramount importance of achieving and maintaining a suitable security environment. The disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme has achieved significant success. The training of the national security forces is ahead of schedule. Although the Afghan Government continues to work hard to improve security, much remains to be done, notably the disbanding of more than 1,800 illegal armed groups.

The decisive international support and the commitment of 30,000 troops on the ground, matched by unequivocal support from neighbouring countries, are key to preventing the current security threats from degenerating into an even more serious and widespread problem.

In spite of the slight decline that has been estimated in the area devoted to poppy cultivation for 2005, the drug trade, along with the actions of the insurgency, continues to be an extremely worrisome obstacle to putting the country back on the track to normality. In our view, the search for alternate livelihoods for poppy growers must be combined with a tougher stance against processors and traffickers.

In conclusion, I would like to stress the need to address specifically the economic and humanitarian problems that have been imposing immense suffering on the Afghan people, especially its most vulnerable segments. Indicators relating to health, sanitation, education, human rights and many other areas continue to be low. The effect of natural disasters has been amplified by the lack of adequate response capacity. Furthermore, the return of more than 3 million refugees has added a burden to efforts to improve social and economic conditions for the population.

The reconstruction of Afghanistan will succeed completely only when even the poorest of its citizens has hope for a better future, free not only from war and violence, but also from blights such as misery, hunger and disease.

Mr. Zhang Yishan (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The Chinese delegation would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Jean Arnault, for his briefing. China commends the efforts made by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), under Mr. Arnault's leadership, to promote reconstruction in Afghanistan.

We note with satisfaction that there has been progress in the peacebuilding process in Afghanistan. In the political field, the new Government, under the leadership of President Karzai, has gained wide acceptance by the people of Afghanistan. Central Government authority has gradually been established, and elections to the lower house of Parliament and the provincial council have progressed in an orderly manner.

In the area of development, Afghanistan has overcome the negative impact of natural disasters and has maintained momentum in its rapid development. The urban economy too has shown a significant increase, and agricultural production has reached record high levels.

In the area of security, the reform of the military, police and security sectors and the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme have been moving ahead smoothly. The Government of Afghanistan continues to make great counter-narcotics efforts and has achieved some progress in that area.

All this shows that, with the help of the United Nations and the international community, Afghanistan has made steady progress along the road towards reconstruction, development and recovery.

The election of a broad-based parliament is not only a final step in the completion of the Bonn process; it is also urgently needed for the establishment of Afghan Government authority. We sincerely hope that

all ethnic groups and factions in that country can maintain a commitment to national reconciliation and unity, that they will actively participate in the elections so as to ensure the smooth conduct and successful outcome of the election, thus paving the way towards completion of the peacebuilding process in Afghanistan. Lack of funding has now become a factor that could limit the smooth conduct of preparations for the elections. We urge the donor community to take urgent measures to meet their commitments and to make further pledges so as to fill the funding gap.

Stabilization and an improved security situation are crucial to preparations for the elections and for economic reconstruction, as well as to international relief efforts. The deterioration in the security situation in Afghanistan is a source of grave concern and should be reversed as soon as possible. We hope that the Afghan Government, with the assistance of UNAMA, the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and other parties concerned, can draw on the experience gained and lessons learned from last year's presidential election and continue to take effective measures to halt the increase in violence and to eliminate any possible security threats to the electoral process.

Sustainable socio-economic development, which is a fundamental guarantor of lasting peace and stability in Afghanistan, is also urgently required, including with regard to efforts to counter narcotics in that country. Many years of war have not only produced an urgent desire in Afghanistan for recovery, they have also resulted in serious threats, including narcotics. We hope that the international community can continue to make efforts to help Afghanistan develop an effective plan for integrated development and the countering of narcotics. We also hope that the international community will be able to work to eliminate the scourge of drugs, which has had a serious impact on peacebuilding in Afghanistan, as soon as possible so as to promote steady recovery and the healthy development of the economy in that country.

Lasting stability and development in Afghanistan is in the interest of world peace and security. China has taken concrete action in the past three years to support and participate in Afghanistan's reconstruction. We have provided Afghanistan assistance within our capabilities.

We support the continuation of the international community's important and positive role in Afghanistan's stability and development. We look forward to the concrete recommendations to be made by the Secretary-General regarding United Nations efforts in the post-Bonn process. We also support the draft presidential statement to be adopted at the conclusion of the Council's debate today.

Mr. Denisov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the States members of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO): Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the Russian Federation and Tajikistan.

We would like to express our gratitude to Mr. Jean Arnault, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for his detailed briefing on the situation in Afghanistan.

We are pleased to note that the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan continues to play an important role in advancing the process of a settlement in Afghanistan. We hope that the Government of Afghanistan and the United Nations Mission will make every effort for successful parliamentary and provincial elections in September of this year. It is important that the established timetable be adhered to, so that viable State bodies that reflect the multi-ethnic and politically diverse nature of Afghan society can be established as soon as possible.

We attach great importance to the activities of the Security Council-sanctioned and NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). We will continue to assist the alliance in carrying out that mission. We hope that, as was the case during the presidential election campaign, ISAF and coalition troops will provide effective assistance to Afghan authorities in the establishment of a safe atmosphere before and during the upcoming elections. We assume that NATO will continue to scrupulously carry out the mandate given to it by the Security Council, including regular reporting to the Security Council.

For us, the most serious concern is the significant increase in recent months in terrorist activities by the Taliban and other extremists, who have re-established part of their infrastructure and launched a campaign that seeks to disrupt parliamentary elections. At the same time, representatives of the Taliban movement and Al-Qaida, many of whom have committed war crimes and outright criminal offences, are making persistent attempts to infiltrate power structures. A number of top officials of the former Taliban regime

have registered as candidates for parliament. Politically, at the very least, those activities run counter to the Security Council's anti-terrorist decisions regarding Afghanistan, including the recent resolution 1617 (2005), on strengthening the sanctions regime against the Taliban and Al-Qaida.

The national reconciliation process is a crucial step in the achievement of a long-term comprehensive settlement of the Afghan conflict. However, that process must take place on the basis of a cautious and responsible approach, without creeping erosion of the sanctions regime, the scope of which goes beyond Afghanistan itself. Persons included on the sanctions list of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1267 (1999) pose a real threat to peace and security. Their involvement in active political life could lead to the direst of consequences and undermine the stability of Afghanistan and the region. Specific action must be taken to counter that dangerous trend, particularly in the context of the upcoming elections. Both the Afghan leadership and the international community — and primarily the United Nations Mission — should play a role in that regard.

Countering the production and proliferation of drugs remains one of the key elements in stabilizing the situation in Afghanistan. Recent expert evaluations by the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime corroborate the conclusion that international efforts to halt the threat posed by narcotics in Afghanistan are still not effective enough. Afghanistan is virtually on the brink of becoming a drug State. We believe that in the near future the most effective strategy — and the one most in keeping with realities in Afghanistan in this regard — should be one that provides tight control of Afghanistan's borders with neighbouring countries by strengthening and establishing new anti-drug "security belts", which the States members of the CSTO have consistently called for.

The CSTO has developed a plan of action to counter the terrorist and narcotics threats emanating from Afghanistan. A working group on Afghanistan under the Council of Foreign Ministers of the CSTO has been established to coordinate the implementation of those measures, in cooperation with the Government of Afghanistan. We call upon interested States and international and regional organizations to closely coordinate their actions regarding a post-conflict settlement in Afghanistan, with a central role played by the United Nations, so that that country may be able to resolve the political and economic problems it faces and become a democratic State.

We believe that a role for the United Nations in Afghan affairs following the completion of the Bonn process should include in particular the coordination of the international community's peacebuilding and reconstruction efforts. The specific structure of a future United Nations presence remains to be determined, but it must involve Afghans themselves and take into account the country's real needs. States members of the CSTO intend to play a very constructive role in that work.

Mr. Mayoral (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate the President and the delegation of Japan for having organized this open debate to discuss the main achievements in Afghanistan since the commencement of the Bonn process, almost four years ago, as well as to consider future prospects resulting from the elections to be held on 18 September 2005.

I wish also to express my thanks to Mr. Jean Arnault, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, for the detailed information he has provided and for his comprehensive introduction of the most recent report of the Secretary-General on this item (S/2005/525). We commend him for his courageous leadership of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA); through him, we convey our appreciation to the rest of the Mission staff.

The holding of elections to the Wolesi Jirga and provincial councils in less than a month's time will mark the completion of the political transition begun at Bonn in December 2001. In that regard — and bearing in mind what Mr. Arnault has told us about the nearly $30 million shortfall in funding for the organization of elections — we appeal to the international donor community to do everything possible to make the contributions needed to cover the shortfall.

Broadly speaking, we agree with Mr. Arnault's assessment that progress made in the process of political transition has not been matched in other key areas such as security, stability and economic reconstruction. Here, we are concerned that, nearly four years after the start of the Bonn process, the security situation — particularly in southern and in parts of eastern Afghanistan — remains so precarious

and that, regrettably, current levels of violence exceed those of past years.

I wish in that regard, on behalf of the chairmanship of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1267 (1999) concerning Al-Qaida and the Taliban and associated individuals and entities, to affirm that we will continue to work actively with other members of the Committee to combat Al-Qaida and Taliban terrorism, both within Afghanistan and outside it.

As has been observed, this resurgence of violence was foreseeable with the approach of the date of the elections, since insurgent groups have constantly tried to undermine the political process and impede the building of democratic Afghan institutions. Yet we must note with great concern that, notwithstanding the military campaign that has been waged for some years and the many national and international efforts in that regard, the insurgency has increased in scale, its weaponry has grown in complexity, its tactics have become more brutal and effective and its sources of financing remain.

The death of 17 Spanish soldiers a few days ago provided further proof of the challenges we face in this area. We take this opportunity to express our condolences on these losses to the bereaved families and to the people and the Government of Spain.

We recognize the scale of the efforts underway in an attempt to control the situation, but we must stress that any military response to such insurgent activities must be carefully calibrated so as to avoid causing greater suffering for the civilian population, which has already endured many years of suffering.

Moreover, in our view, we should not lose sight of the fact that a military response must not be the sole approach to resolving the problems stemming from extremist violence. We must also take firm measures to cut off the sources of financing and to limit the capacity of such groups to engage in training and to take refuge in border areas. That requires the cooperation of all of Afghanistan's neighbouring countries.

We consider that the situation related to narcotics production and trafficking is equally worrisome. Afghanistan continues, unfortunately, to be the world's largest opium producer; 60 per cent of its gross domestic product comes from the illegal drug trade. We regret the fact that, despite the plans that have been put into effect to date, the results in terms of eradication have been modest. Clearly, money used to purchase weapons also comes from this drug trade. Making progress in this area too will be crucial for the country's future, since the drug economy is another factor fueling insecurity and violence.

The seriousness of the situation in the two areas I have mentioned also explains the inadequate progress towards reconstruction and economic development in Afghanistan. Although Afghanistan's economic and social indicators have risen, they remain low; this is a matter of concern because it is the result of the decades of conflict that has ravaged the country.

We must highlight the significant process that has been made in the framework of the Bonn process, which will come to a conclusion next month, notably with respect to: the establishment of democratically elected political institutions; civil administration reform, at least at the central or national level; the establishment of national security institutions; and the near completion of the process of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration for members of the Afghan military forces.

However, all those achievements do not seem to be enough to attain lasting pace in Afghanistan. More time is needed to improve security, build effective and legitimate institutions and ensure Afghanistan's economic and social development. For that reason, we believe that the international community should continue to provide assistance for the normalization of the situation in Afghanistan in coming years.

In that regard, we consider that a United Nations presence should continue beyond March 2006; we support UNAMA's endeavours to prepare for the next stage. It seems to us that the principles set out in the report of the Secretary-General form a good basis for defining a framework for such participation.

We look forward to receiving the specific recommendations mentioned by Mr. Arnault before the expiry of UNAMA's mandate so that the United Nations can continue contributing to meeting the objective of establishing lasting and sustainable peace in Afghanistan.

I wish in conclusion to express our gratitude for the second revision of the draft presidential statement on the situation in Afghanistan, which my delegation supports unreservedly.

Mr. Faaborg-Andersen (Denmark): I would like to join others in thanking Mr. Arnault for his excellent briefing on the current situation in Afghanistan.

After more than 20 years of conflict, the Afghan people have a strong wish for peace, democracy, security and improved living conditions. Against them stand frustrated warlords, drug barons, Al-Qaida and the Taliban, for whom constant instability and a weak State would be the ideal. We must not allow those negative forces to succeed. Afghanistan has travelled a long way since the end of Taliban rule. Denmark believes that, with continued military, political and development assistance from the international community, the overall positive trend will continue, despite the numerous challenges ahead.

Denmark is pleased to note that preparations for the elections to the Wolesi Jirga and the provincial councils, to be held on 18 September, are on track. A high voter turnout will be crucial, and Denmark hopes in particular that the high turnout of woman at last year's presidential elections can be repeated or even surpassed at the upcoming elections. Denmark further welcomes the positive role played by the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) in monitoring political rights up to the elections.

In order for the preparations for the elections to proceed as scheduled, the remaining funding gap of some $29 million must urgently be closed. Denmark has recently decided to increase its financial contribution for the elections and hopes that others will do the same.

Efforts to provide security will be crucial to minimize the potential for intimidation of candidates and voters during the forthcoming elections.

Denmark is concerned about the deteriorating security situation in the south and east of Afghanistan and the increasing number of assaults on the Afghan and international security forces. In that regard we extend our sincere condolences to the Spanish Government and the families for the recent tragic loss of personnel. The growing influence of non-Afghan, including Al-Qaida, elements, the growing sophistication of Taliban and Al-Qaida weaponry and the increased targeting of local communities and their leaders are particularly worrying.

We welcome the successful conclusion of the formal process of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and strongly support the ongoing programme to disband illegal armed groups.

Another key priority in improving the security situation in Afghanistan must remain combating the cultivation, sale and trafficking of illegal drugs, which — as the Secretary-General's latest report on Afghanistan (S/2005/525) points out — is used to fund crime, corruption, illegal armed groups and extremist elements. Assistance to developing alternative livelihoods should continue to play a central role in those endeavours.

Denmark hopes that the elections can be a stepping-stone to the development of a new framework for international engagement beyond the Bonn process. Afghanistan is still facing daunting challenges with regional and global ramifications that demand our full attention. Afghan leadership and inclusiveness, as well as sustained international support, will be crucial to ensure the success of the Kabul-based process.

In order to clarify the priorities of the Kabul compact it is my hope that the discussions initiated between the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the Afghan Government can be extended in near future to include both a broad dialogue within the country and a dialogue between Afghanistan and the international community. Denmark would like to see the Kabul compact address a prioritized range of nation-building issues and further the momentum by setting out clear targets, deadlines and demands to Afghanistan as well as to the international community.

It is for the international community to support and help implement the goals and priorities set by the Afghan Government. Denmark has decided to extend its development and humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan until 2009 and encourages other development partners to enter into similar long-term commitments.

Finally, Denmark attaches great importance to institution-building and civil administration reform, particularly in the justice sector. This would include strengthening the rule of law, rooting out corruption and ensuring the protection of human rights, including women's rights. In the field of transitional justice, the action plan developed jointly by the Government of Afghanistan, the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission and UNAMA is encouraging and must be

brought forward so that steps can soon be taken towards its implementation.

In conclusion, Denmark would like to thank Mr. Arnault and his staff in UNAMA for their hard work and dedication in helping to bring about a better future for the people of Afghanistan. In light of the positive results achieved so far, Denmark supports a continued strong role for UNAMA. We agree that an increasingly Afghan-led process requires enhanced coordination of the international actors, and we look forward to engaging constructively with the Government of Afghanistan, UNAMA and other partners both through the Kabul process and in the coming consultation processes on the future role of UNAMA.

Finally, Sir, we support the presidential statement to be adopted on the issue of Afghanistan subsequent to this meeting.

Mr. Zinsou (Benin) (*spoke in French*): We would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Jean Arnault, for the excellent introduction to the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan (S/2005/525). We thank him for bringing us up to date on the latest developments in the country. The in-depth analysis of the situation in the report of the Secretary-General is particularly instructive concerning progress made by Afghanistan in the past three years and the stages that remain before the transitional process can be completed.

My delegation has noted three central points for action that we believe deserve special attention by the Security Council: legislative elections, security problems and the importance of post-transition peacebuilding.

The overview presented to us on the preparations for the elections shows how Afghanistan is building on the achievements of the transition to make progress, drawing upon the effective partnership established with the international community. The achievements of that partnership are considerable in light of the difficulties described in the report.

The question of securing the funding for the elections is a concern for the international community. Given the notable progress that has been made, it would be incomprehensible if the process were held up because of inadequate funding. We therefore urge the generous donors that are supporting the Afghan people to provide the additional support needed for a happy outcome to the transition process.

Vote counting requires that we learn the lessons from the October 2004 presidential election. It is important to reinforce security when transporting the ballot boxes from the voting stations to the vote-counting stations. That will ensure that all the votes cast by the people carry their full weight in the choice of their representatives.

Dealing with security problems is a crucial matter. We note that extremists and illegal armed groups continue to pose a major challenge to peace and stability in Afghanistan. We support the commitment of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) to work alongside the Afghan forces to demobilize the illegal armed groups. The modalities for that demobilization must be tailored to the goals being pursued.

The projections for the increase in strength of the Afghan army and police force give rise to optimism, as does the progress of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration. We pay tribute to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and to countries that have contributed to measures to provide lasting security in the country. We urge them to continue their unceasing efforts to provide Afghanistan the means and human resources needed to consolidate the new order that is being established in the country.

The rising power of the insurrection is a major challenge for all involved. The Secretary-General rightly draws our attention to the need to eliminate the sources of financing and external support of the insurrection.

The negative impact of the insurrection on the humanitarian assistance activities is of concern. We call for a strengthening of the military forces to protect humanitarian workers in order to speed up the process of rebuilding the country. In that regard, we share the concerns of the Secretary-General, who has highlighted the risks of a premature disengagement by the international community in the post-election phase. The irreversibility of progress depends on ongoing support for the implementation of the strategies and approaches adopted in the various sectors of activity to generate beneficial synergies for the recovery of the country.

The international community must remain mobilized at the side of the Afghan people in order to maintain the momentum of reconstruction and to strengthen the ongoing reforms. It is essential to continue the partnership between donor countries and the Afghan authorities. In particular, integrated, multisectoral assistance is needed to eliminate narcotics structures and provide attractive and profitable alternatives.

It is positive that the Afghan Government and the United Nations have clearly identified the fundamental principles that will contribute to strengthening international cooperation for the reconstruction of Afghanistan.

Mr. Bolton (United States of America): I would like to thank the representative of Greece for allowing me to do earlier something that I had planned to do later. It is something that, while not entirely revolutionary, may be precedential. With your indulgence, Mr. President, rather than read out my remarks, I am simply going to ask that they be circulated for the careful consideration of everyone on the Council.

The President: I thank the representative of the United States for circulating his paper and for the brevity of his intervention.

Mr. Baja (Philippines): Mr. President, I commend your initiative of holding this open meeting on Afghanistan. We also thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Jean Arnault, for presenting the Secretary-General's report (S/2005/525) and for his comprehensive briefing on the preparations for the elections.

In less than four weeks, the Afghan people will once again exercise their right of suffrage, this time to vote in the crucial parliamentary and provincial council elections. We are pleased that the electoral process, apart from some funding problems, is on track. We are hopeful that, with the lessons learned from last year's presidential elections and with the full support of the international community, particularly the donor countries, the September elections will be successful and will achieve the objectives of the political agenda of the Bonn process.

My delegation welcomes the efforts being made by the Government of President Karzai and the international community towards the holding of the parliamentary and local elections. Those elections will be significantly more complicated than the historic presidential elections of last year, and we are gratified that the Afghan people, with the help of the international community, are once more exhibiting their resolve to determine their political future through the process of democratic elections. It is important that international donors respond urgently to the appeal of the Secretary-General to fill the funding gap to ensure that the preparations for the elections remain on track. The successful conduct of the elections depends to a large extent on the timely completion of the technical process.

One vital element that will determine the credibility and the integrity of the coming elections is the security environment in which the elections are conducted. As with last year's presidential elections, the security environment should ensure that the people are able to exercise their choice freely, without fear or intimidation.

The recent successes with respect to some elements of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme contribute positively to improved security, such as the completion of the disarmament of illegal armed groups, the safe removal and cantonment of heavy weapons and progress in the disbandment of illegal armed groups. However, recent acts of violence, attributed to the increasing terrorist activities of the Taliban, Al-Qaida and other extremist groups, are cause for concern, particularly as they target election workers and civilians. Worse, not only are those groups now better organized, armed and funded, but they are now clearly aiming to destabilize the Afghan political situation. The challenge is to cut off the source of their funds.

Given that worsening security environment, we urge that the planned expansion of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) be pursued urgently. We join the Secretary-General's call for ISAF countries to adopt common and robust rules of engagement to enhance the Force's ability to respond to the more difficult situations that it is expected to encounter as it expands. We acknowledge the contribution of the United States forces, ISAF and the NATO peacekeeping operation in enhancing the security environment.

My delegation also wishes to highlight the Secretary-General's observation that "the completion

of the political transition is a vital step, but this alone will not be sufficient for the establishment of lasting peace in Afghanistan" (*S/2005/525, para. 81*).

It is indeed time for the international community to start considering a new framework for engagement with Afghanistan after the completion of the political process. The institutional agenda of the Bonn Agreement will now have to be pursued simultaneously with the reconstruction process.

The development of effective government institutions at the local and provincial levels will be crucial to ensure that the vital economic recovery, as well as humanitarian and social protection programmes, including those of civil society and non-governmental organizations, stream down to the population throughout the country. Those institutions will be vital in facing the challenges posed by the counter-narcotics implementation plan, including livelihood alternatives to poppy cultivation, development and rehabilitation projects to deliver basic services to the people, disaster-response mechanisms and measures to address the needs of the more than 3 million refuges that have returned to Afghanistan.

Clearly, sustained international support is needed in the coming post-electoral stage to achieve security, full disarmament and justice and a competent civilian administration in all provinces with a view to ensuring the development of those institutions. My delegation welcomes the clear identification by the Secretary-General of the key principles for further enhancing cooperation between the Government of Afghanistan and the international community.

Finally, we wish to pay tribute once again to the Afghan people for their unwavering determination, in the face of great odds, to chart their political future. It is important that the international community and the Security Council enhance Afghanistan's ownership of that political process.

Mr. Mahiga (United Republic of Tanzania): Mr. President, thank you for welcoming some of us back. Allow me to congratulate you belatedly on assuming the presidency of the Council for the month of August. Let me also thank the delegation of Greece for a very successful presidency last month.

I join previous speakers in thanking the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report on the situation in Afghanistan (S/2005/525). My Government pays tribute to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and the donor countries for their tireless efforts in bringing Afghanistan back within the fold of the international community.

There is some cause to rejoice as the political process mapped by the Bonn Agreement proceeds. The parliamentary elections planned for 18 September offer a glimmer of hope that this process will continue to give shape to an Afghan political life founded on a constitutionally acceptable and representative Government. However, there is growing concern about whether the elections will create a strong and stable parliament, as some political parties are being sidelined. We therefore urge the establishment of a mechanism that will guarantee participation by all political parties and all sectors of society, including women.

Another aspect of major concern is the increase in the cultivation and the trade of narcotics, which funds crime, corruption and illegal armed activities. As the Secretary-General's report indicates, Afghanistan remains the largest producer of opium, providing nearly 87 per cent of the world's total supply. The magnitude of the problem calls for serious and committed regional and international engagement to combat the production of opium in Afghanistan. We commend the efforts of the Afghan Government, the United Nations, the United Kingdom as the lead nation and all other countries that are assisting Afghanistan in reducing the cultivation of illegal drugs. Those efforts have resulted in a slight reduction compared to last year. Nevertheless, we consider that replacing opium production with that of other crops is only a half measure. Those efforts must be accompanied by intensifying the world campaign against the use of illicit drugs. For without a reduction in the demand for such drugs, the illegal supply will continue.

We are pleased to note the renewal of an agreement between Afghanistan and neighbouring countries that guarantees the voluntary return of Afghan refugees from those countries with the assistance of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. It is also a significant step that the returnees are being registered as voters for the September parliamentary elections.

We are also encouraged by the positive effect of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in maintaining peace in Kabul, and we support the call for the expansion of ISAF beyond Kabul to other urban areas. The deteriorating security situation in some parts of the country needs to be addressed in a more creative and robust manner. We wish to express our condolences to Spain and to the relatives of the personnel who lost their lives in Afghanistan recently in a helicopter incident.

The disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme, institution-building and reform, the legal and regulatory framework and the economic reconstruction of Afghanistan are still daunting challenges for the Afghan authorities, for UNAMA and for all the countries assisting Afghanistan in its slow and painful transition from being a pariah State to being an internationally respectable legal State. We salute the progress achieved so far, but the work that remains to bring Afghanistan to a state of peace and normalcy is nowhere near completion. It is therefore imperative that the funding gap for the coming elections, for building democratic governance institutions, for reintegration and for reconstruction be filled to ensure the uninterrupted continuation of peacebuilding programmes.

The Tanzania delegation calls upon the Government and the people of Afghanistan to work together for peace, to conduct fair and inclusive parliamentary elections, to engage in confidence-building measures and to cooperate with the United Nations and the development partners that are assisting them in building democratic institutions and in the reconstruction of the Afghan economy. We call on the illegal armed groups to desist from further violence and from disrupting the political process and instead to join in the restoration of peace and security and in their country's development efforts after two decades of devastating violent conflict.

In conclusion, Mr. President, we welcome and support the draft presidential statement prepared by your delegation on the situation in Afghanistan.

Sir Emyr Jones Parry (United Kingdom): I have the honour to speak also on behalf of the European Union (EU) and the countries that have aligned themselves with this statement.

The European Union warmly welcomes Mr. Arnault's briefing and today's debate, on the eve of a crucial period for Afghanistan. It provides us with the opportunity to reaffirm the long-term commitment of the European Union and the rest of the international community to Afghanistan's regeneration.

We congratulate the Government and the people of Afghanistan on the huge strides that they have made since the Bonn Agreement of December 2001. We share their vision of a stable, peaceful and democratic Afghanistan taking its rightful place in the community of nations. As the Bonn process nears completion, the European Union affirms its commitment to continue supporting the efforts, already under way, of the Government of Afghanistan to take forward progress on good governance; the rule of law; human rights, including women's rights; institutional capacity-building; economic development; poverty reduction; and counter-narcotics efforts. As the Secretary-General noted in his very helpful report (S/2005/525) of 12 August, significant challenges remain in all those areas, which, if left unchecked, threaten to undermine the progress made to date in Afghanistan.

In close cooperation with the Government of Afghanistan, EU member States have taken the lead in a number of key areas. Germany coordinates international support for the efforts of the Government of Afghanistan to develop an impartial and effective national police force, Italy coordinates international assistance to help establish a justice-based system founded on the rule of law; the United Kingdom coordinates counter-narcotics efforts and France leads efforts aimed at providing support to the new National Assembly. In addition, EU member States have contributed both funds and expert assistance to the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process and are supporting the programme aimed at the disbandment of illegal armed groups.

The European Union welcomes the prospect of the parliamentary and provincial elections that, as we have heard, are due to take place on 18 September 2005. Those elections, following on from the presidential election in October 2004, mark a further step towards the entrenchment of democracy in Afghanistan. The European Union is contributing to the success of the elections in several ways. An EU electoral observer mission will monitor all aspects of the elections. In terms of financial assistance, the EU collectively — that is to say, its member States plus the European Union budget — is providing a contribution of $60 million towards the cost of organizing the

elections. That contribution represents just one element of a larger $3.8 billion collective EU package over five years, all of which supports the reconstruction of Afghanistan.

Many EU member States are also deploying security resources, as part of the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), to help the Government of Afghanistan ensure a secure environment throughout the country, particularly for the elections.

In that connection, I would also like to pay my respects to the 17 Spanish peacekeepers who lost their lives in a helicopter crash in the province of Herat last week. We offer our condolences to their families and to the Government and the people of Spain.

Several European Union member States are today leading provincial reconstruction teams throughout the country. Some EU member States are also participating in the United States-led coalition Operation Enduring Freedom, which provides a security presence in the south and the east of the country. The EU supports the efforts of the Government of Afghanistan and of the international community to create a secure environment in which the people of Afghanistan can live without fear of terrorism or violence, and condemns those elements that seek to undermine the country's progress. The EU supports a continued security presence of the international community until such time as Afghan security forces are fully operational.

It is right that we should acknowledge the excellent work of UNAMA and Special Representative Arnault and their constructive relationship with the Government of Afghanistan. We look forward to contributing to discussions about an agreed framework for the next phase of international engagement in Afghanistan, and we hope that the United Nations will continue to play a significant and leading role.

The EU wishes to inform its partners that the Council of Foreign Ministers has invited Mr. Javier Solana, the High Representative, and the European Commission to prepare proposals for a long-term comprehensive framework for EU-Afghanistan relations following the September 2005 parliamentary elections.

I should now like to make a few brief points in my national capacity.

The United Kingdom welcomes the determination of the Government of Afghanistan — including the personal commitment of President Karzai — to tackle the drug trade. There have been a number of significant successes this year. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime is expected to confirm later this month that cultivation levels in some of the traditional poppy-growing provinces are down. At the same time, the tempo of interdiction operations against the opium trade is on the rise, and the first convictions of drug traffickers were secured in May this year.

Nevertheless, sustainable drug-elimination strategies — including the creation of alternative livelihoods — take time, particularly when the challenges are as severe as they are in Afghanistan. They also require the cooperation of neighbouring States and better control of borders. Furthermore, the cultivation of and trafficking in narcotics is not an isolated challenge, but one that threatens to undermine all aspects of the reconstruction effort. Unless we increase our shared commitment to countering narcotics in Afghanistan, we face a real risk of strategic failure in the long term.

The United Kingdom notes in this respect the establishment of the Counter-Narcotics Trust Fund referred to in paragraph 38 of the Secretary-General's report (S/2005/525). As the lead nation for counter-narcotics, the United Kingdom would urge international partners to contribute to the Trust Fund and to consider seconding international mentors to support law enforcement and criminal justice training in Afghanistan. Channeling funding through the Counter-Narcotics Trust Fund will ensure that resources are allocated transparently and effectively, while at the same time giving the Government of Afghanistan greater ownership of and the ability to manage and tackle the narcotics problem.

Finally, the United Kingdom is a significant contributor to the International Security Assistance Force, and we are looking forward to succeeding Italy in assuming the leadership of that Force in April 2006, when the allied rapid reaction corps will deploy to Afghanistan.

Like other colleagues, I am very content with the proposed draft presidential statement.

Mr. Duclos (France) (*spoke in French*): I too would like to thank Mr. Jean Arnault for his briefing,

which supplements the report of the Secretary-General of 12 August 2005 (S/2005/525).

I would like to make a few comments in my national capacity to supplement the statement made by the representative of the United Kingdom on behalf of the European Union.

First, I would like to stress the importance of the legislative and provincial elections that will be taking place in a little more than three weeks' time. That will be a crucial phase, which should make it possible to finalize the political process. Many challenges remain to be overcome, and we will all need to pool our efforts with a view to ensuring the success of the elections. I would like to say, in my national capacity, that we are providing 1 million euros to help bridge the funding gap for the elections. We will also be strengthening our military contingent, since security is, of course, a crucial element in that respect.

Secondly, we must ensure that after 18 September the elected authorities are properly established. It is in that context that we are undertaking efforts — as the Ambassador of the United Kingdom pointed out — to coordinate support for the establishment of the Afghan parliament. We will be providing 2.5 million euros for that objective, and, together with our partners in that undertaking, we intend to train 150 parliamentary officials.

Thirdly, we are pleased to note that the Afghan Government has confirmed its wish to continue to benefit from the support of the international community once the parliamentary elections have been held and the Bonn Agreement process has been completed. Naturally we support continued action on the part of the international community, and we endorse the principles outlined by the Secretary-General in his two recent reports on the modalities for and the principles governing international assistance in the new phase that will then commence.

Finally, we would like to stress again, as colleagues have done, our concern about the insecurity that continues to prevail in the country, despite the major efforts that we are making in that area. A high price has been paid by some countries in terms of soldiers' lives, including by the United States and Spain. I should like here to pay special tribute to the Spanish soldiers who recently gave their lives in fulfilment of their courageous commitment to the country. We express our condolences to the people and the Government of Spain.

In conclusion, the threats to security and the attacks and risks that continue to undermine the stability of Afghanistan must stiffen the resolve of us all and help us to move forward on all fronts: security, combating the drug trade, disarmament, training the Afghan army and police force and combating terrorist groups.

Like other speakers, we would like to say that we support the draft presidential statement.

Mr. Benmehidi (Algeria) (*spoke in French*): I should like at the outset to thank you, Mr. President, for having convened this public meeting. I would also like to thank Mr. Arnault for presenting the report of the Secretary-General (S/2005/525), as well as for the comprehensive and useful briefing that he gave us on the current situation.

Afghanistan has made great progress and achieved remarkable results in implementing the Bonn Agreement. The peace process has been moving steadily forward and the country is committed to the path of stability. The legislative and provincial elections scheduled for 18 September, which will mark the completion of the Bonn process, are an essential step in establishing democracy in Afghanistan. In this regard, we pay tribute to the efforts of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan in assisting the Afghan Government.

Preparations for the elections have been successfully carried out, despite the worsening security situation, particularly in the south and parts of the east of the country. More than 5,000 candidates have presented themselves, and 1.5 million new voters have been registered. Those are positive steps in the electoral process. Now the Afghan Government, with the assistance of the international community, needs to take the necessary steps to ensure that the elections are successful.

We have noted a disquieting deterioration of the security situation in recent months as a result of the resurgence of acts of violence of terrorist and criminal origin. The worsening security situation risks negating the efforts to rebuild the country. That is why, as the Secretary-General notes in his report, international assistance in the area of security is essential for Afghanistan. It is also important that the Afghan

Government and the International Security Assistance Force tackle the violence and its underlying causes.

The disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process, which is essential for the establishment of lasting stability in Afghanistan, will allow for the holding of free and fair elections throughout the country and strengthen the authority of the central Government. In that regard, we welcome the completion of the process of the disarmament and demobilization of former soldiers and officers of the Afghan armed forces and the progress made with respect to the cantonment of heavy weapons.

It must be acknowledged that drug production and drug trafficking have prospered. In the long term, that will pose a threat to the stability of the country and its economic reconstruction, and it must therefore be combated. The measures taken by the Afghan Government and by other partners to curb this evil are welcome and must plainly be dovetailed with strengthened controls and with poverty eradication programmes. It is also essential that cooperation and dialogue between the Government of Afghanistan and neighbouring countries continue.

If the peace process is to be irreversible, the international community must continue its efforts to build peace and stability in Afghanistan, which will continue to need external assistance following the transition, which will be complete when the legislative and local elections have taken place.

Lastly, Mr. President, I would like to lend my delegation's support to the draft statement that you have been kind enough to present.

Mr. Motoc (Romania): I wish first to welcome Japan's initiative to convene this timely debate on the situation in Afghanistan. More generally, Japan is to be congratulated on its significant contribution to the overall international efforts aimed at establishing lasting peace in Afghanistan, and in particular on its notable performance as the lead nation in the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme. Special acknowledgement and credit are also due for the leadership assumed by the Japanese delegation here in New York in coordinating the Security Council's initiatives and action on the Afghan question.

I would like also to join other members of the Council in thanking Special Representative Jean Arnault for the comprehensive briefing he provided today and for the substantial activity that was behind that briefing. I also thank the Secretary-General for his latest report on the question (S/2005/525).

I shall be brief, since Romania, as an acceding country, aligns itself fully with the statement just made by Ambassador Jones Parry on behalf of the European Union.

Remarkable progress has been achieved so far in the implementation of the Bonn process. This would not have been possible without the resilience and determination of the Afghan people, and without the partnership between the Government of Afghanistan and the international community. As the Bonn process is due to be completed with the holding of parliamentary elections in September, now is the right time to take stock of what has been accomplished so far and define the future steps that will consolidate progress made to date and make it irreversible.

Undoubtedly, Afghanistan will continue to need the support of the international community. As the Secretary-General rightly pointed out in his report, security, effective institutions and development will continue to require time and concerted efforts beyond the completion of the Bonn process.

It is in this context that Romania supports the Secretary-General's intention to launch a process of consultations on the post-electoral agenda. We look forward to participating in upcoming discussions on the future role of the United Nations in Afghanistan. We are of the view that the United Nations should continue to play a central role in coordinating the efforts of the international community in Afghanistan, building upon the remarkable work already performed by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General.

Turning now to the current developments in Afghanistan, we consider the forthcoming parliamentary elections to be a major priority. We are very much encouraged that preparations are on track. No effort should be spared to ensure the successful holding of elections. The electoral process has to take place in a safe and stable environment. The recent outbreaks of violence, especially in the southern part of the country, are a vivid reminder of the persistence of terrorist threats alongside other challenges to the stability of Afghanistan. The extended presence of

international forces remains key to improving security conditions and, thus, to securing the prospects for the successful holding of elections — as well as, beyond that point, to ensuring the sustainability of the ţ ace process.

NATO's commitment to continue to expand its presence in the country is, therefore, highly commendable. For its part, Romania is temporarily increasing its military presence in Afghanistan, with 400 additional troops as supplementary assistance in providing security for the elections. This temporary increase will add to the 543 troops already in ISAF and Operation Enduring Freedom.

I think it is appropriate at this juncture to pay tribute to the sacrifice made by 17 of their Spanish colleagues serving on the ground in Afghanistan and to convey our most sincere and deepest condolences and sympathy to the Spanish Government and people.

Also with regard to the security situation, the launching of the disbandment of illegal armed groups was timely and very much needed to ensure not only more stable conditions in the country, but also more credibility as concerns the elections.

Turning now to counter-narcotics efforts, we are supportive of a comprehensive approach that covers the whole range of activities connected to narcotics and takes into account the specific circumstances in Afghanistan. Special emphasis should be placed on creating alternative livelihoods. Moreover, counter-narcotics efforts at the national level should be accompanied by coordinated action undertaken at the regional and even the international levels, as my delegation has constantly maintained. At present, the Romanian Government is engaged in a process of putting into practice a proposal to support international efforts to combat narco-trafficking through offering alternative livelihoods to Afghans.

To conclude, I would like to reiterate Romania's belief that Afghanistan requires a long-term commitment and a comprehensive framework for the international community's engagement. Our ultimate goal should be to secure the achievement of the primary objective that was placed very high within the Bonn process; that of a stable, peaceful and democratic Afghanistan. Romania has invested too much in that direction to settle for anything less, and we trust that all international actors collaborating in the ongoing efforts in Afghanistan share that ambitious objective.

Lastly, Sir, permit me to express my delegation's support for the draft presidential statement that you have so kindly submitted.

The President: I thank the representative of Romania for his kind words addressed to the Japanese presidency.

Mr. Vassilakis (Greece): Thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this debate and for the leading role Japan is playing in Afghanistan.

First of all, I wish to extend our deepest condolences to the Government and the people of Spain on the recent loss of 17 Spanish soldiers while on a mission of peace.

Our sincere thanks go to Mr. Arnault for his thorough presentation on the situation in Afghanistan. I wish to commend the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) for its hard work, dedication and invaluable contribution towards helping the people of Afghanistan during these difficult and critical times.

Greece fully aligns itself with the statement made by the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom on behalf of the European Union. In addition, I would like to make the following remarks.

The parliamentary and provincial elections due to take place in Afghanistan on 18 September mark an important threshold in the country's long and difficult journey to a stable, peaceful and democratic future and the completion of the Bonn process. We are all very much aware of the many serious problems the country continues to face. Nevertheless, it is heartening to see the progress made in recent years, and we are encouraged by recent positive developments and the overall timely preparations for the upcoming elections.

After the elections, a new process will begin. The key responsibility will lie with the Government and the people of Afghanistan, who will determine in which ways the international community can provide assistance so that their aspirations to peace, security, stability, democracy and economic development can be fully attained.

There is no doubt that, among all the serious problems, security has proven to be the most difficult. The recent escalation in violence poses serious threats, and not only to the forthcoming elections. The murders of, and attacks against, international humanitarian

personnel and those working for the reconstruction of Afghanistan are particularly deplorable. The commitment and engagement of the Afghan Government in that regard are crucial.

The progress made in establishing and training the Afghan National Army and police officers is a hopeful development. The same is true with regard to the positive results in the implementation of the demobilization and disarmament components of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme. We hope that the extension of the programme to members of illegal armed groups will be equally effective. The international community stands firm in its commitment to create conditions of stability and security in the country, and it condemns all acts of violence and terrorism, which undermine the efforts of the Afghan people for a better future.

Counter-narcotics activities are another important area in which the concerted efforts of the Afghan Government and the international community are needed to tackle the problem. The narcotics industry and its accompanying corruption are clearly one of the biggest threats in building an effective and democratic Afghanistan, and deeply affect the country's long-term prospects for peace, stability and development. Opium poppy cultivation is one of the largest sources of illegal income. It serves to support criminal and factional agendas that aim to undermine the central Government. The Government of Afghanistan has demonstrated the necessary commitment, and has undertaken serious measures in order to deal with this issue, but there has thus far been no tangible progress. That is worrisome. If the current situation regarding illegal drug cultivation and trafficking continues, political progress, economic growth and social development will not be achieved and consolidated.

Afghanistan has made enormous progress in recent years. Many challenges remain to be overcome. Although some of those problems, and their complexity, may seem daunting, we believe that the Afghan people have the courage and determination to overcome them. Continued international engagement and support are crucial in that respect. We value the commitment and the contributions of the United Nations and individual countries, as well as those of non-governmental organizations, civil society and humanitarian organizations, to assist Afghanistan and its people. The completion of the Bonn process must be a clear benchmark.

We welcome the Secretary-General's intention to initiate a process that will concretely define the future role of the United Nations in Afghanistan. We look forward to receiving his proposals, as we believe that the United Nations has a significant role to play in the country's continuing progress towards the better future it truly deserves.

Finally, we support the draft presidential statement to be adopted by the Council on the situation in Afghanistan.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Japan.

First, I wish to express my gratitude to Mr. Jean Arnault, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for his briefing. I commend Mr. Arnault and his staff in the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) for their remarkable dedication and contributions to promoting and consolidating peace in Afghanistan.

As the Bonn process approaches its final and most delicate stage, we are encouraged that preparations are on track for the elections scheduled for 18 September. Japan has contributed a substantial amount to date for the elections, including emergency assistance totalling $8 million. However, as the Special Representative of the Secretary-General has pointed out, there still exists a significant funding gap for the elections. We urge the international community to be generous in meeting that shortage without delay.

Despite the overall encouraging progress in the political process in Afghanistan, the security situation remains extremely volatile. It is even deteriorating in some parts of the country. The report of the Secretary-General (S/2005/525) pointed out a worrisome development: insurgency attacks are growing and becoming more sophisticated, deadlier and better organized and funded. That development is a matter of serious concern for the Afghan Government and the international community.

The International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) is being reinforced by NATO countries and other troop contributors to enable its deployment in an expanded area. We commend those countries for their efforts. The international community's presence should be maintained at the same level beyond the elections. The Security Council should begin discussions, at the

earliest possible opportunity, on extending the mandate of ISAF.

As the lead nation in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration efforts in Afghanistan, Japan is pleased to announce that the disarmament phase of the programme has been completed; a ceremony was held in July to commemorate the completion. We remain strongly committed to supporting the efforts of Afghanistan to achieve the remaining objectives, namely, the completion of the reintegration of Afghan military forces by the end of next June and the disbandment of illegal armed groups.

In addition to the serious challenges in the security sector, Afghanistan must confront other enormous and multifaceted challenges, including fighting the production and trafficking of narcotics, institution-building and economic and social development — in other words, the full gamut of challenges that a country can face in post-conflict peacebuilding.

After so much investment and so many sacrifices made for peace by Afghans themselves and by the international community, we must not fail Afghanistan. It is clear that the continued role of the United Nations in the consolidation of peace in Afghanistan — which we fully support — is essential for the post-election agenda. We must accelerate the discussion on a framework for maintaining diverse cooperation after the Bonn process ends with the September elections. We welcome and encourage the Secretary-General's intention to initiate a process of consultation with the Government of Afghanistan and all concerned international actors to determine the post-electoral agenda and to present specific proposals to the Security Council prior to the expiration of UNAMA's mandate.

In that connection, we would like to recall that, in a statement in June, the Foreign Ministers of the Group of Eight stated that they looked forward to working with the Government of Afghanistan and the United Nations in renewing the partnership between Afghanistan and the international community for the period following the parliamentary elections. For its part, Japan will spare no effort to work together with the international community — which will certainly endeavour to maintain the high level of commitment that it has shown over the past three and a half years — in helping to achieve the consolidation of peace and sustainable economic and social development in Afghanistan.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

As a measure to optimize the use of our time in order to allow as many delegations to take the floor as possible, I will not individually invite speakers to take seats at the table or invite them to resume their seats at the side of the Council Chamber. When a speaker is taking the floor, the Conference Officer will meet the next speaker on the list at the table. I thank participants for their understanding and cooperation.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Afghanistan, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Farhâdi (Afghanistan): Let me begin by extending our condolences to the people and the Government of Spain and the bereaved families of the 17 Spanish soldiers who lost their lives as a result of a tragic helicopter crash in the western province of Herat, Afghanistan, on 16 August 2005. I also extend my condolences to the families of others who have also lost their lives in Afghanistan in the fight against international terrorism.

Allow me to express my sincere congratulations to you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of August. I would also like to convey my compliments to your predecessor, Ambassador Adamantios Vassilakis, on the outstanding manner in which he handled the Council's proceedings during the month of July.

My delegation also wishes to express its gratitude to you, Mr. President, and the other members of the Council for including Afghanistan as an item on the Council's agenda for this month. We are thankful to delegations whose statements have presented valuable and noteworthy views on the situation in Afghanistan.

We are very thankful to Mr. Jean Arnault, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), who provided detailed information updating and completing the report of the Secretary-General dated 12 August (S/2005/525).

The successful completion of the parliamentary elections scheduled for 18 September 2005 will mark the last step towards implementation of the historic Bonn Agreement of December 2001. Since the signing of the Agreement, Afghanistan, with the vigorous and sustained support of the international community, has succeeded in achieving many objectives that once seemed beyond reach.

The meeting today will serve as an opportunity for members of the Council and other Member States to assess the achievements thus far and to reflect on the form of continued cooperation between Afghanistan and the international community that is to take place upon the conclusion of the UNAMA mandate.

The Government of Afghanistan expects to see the international community playing a role in ensuring the security of Afghanistan during the post-Bonn period. United Nations authorization of that continued role would be welcome.

My delegation is grateful to the Secretary-General and his colleagues for the report dated 12 August 2005, entitled, "The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security" (S/2005/525). The report offers a lucid illustration of the developments during the past four years, while also referring to the challenges that remain to achieving sustainable economic and social development and to ensuring peace, stability and security in Afghanistan.

The determination and political will expressed by the people of Afghanistan have made possible the gradual, yet arduous, transition towards stability and democracy in Afghanistan. During that transition, Afghanistan successfully adopted a new constitution, enshrining the principles of democracy, and successfully held its first-ever presidential elections on 9 October 2004.

We have now entered the final and key phase in the implementation of the Bonn Agreement — the holding of parliamentary and provincial elections. Nearly 6,000 Afghans have met the qualifications to become candidates in the upcoming elections, more than 600 of whom are women. Candidates began their official campaigns on 17 August and are expected to continue their efforts until 17 September — one day prior to the elections.

The Government of Afghanistan expresses its gratitude to the European Union, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and all other international partners that have deployed electoral support teams to monitor the electoral process. That support will benefit the activities of the Joint Electoral Management Body in ensuring the transparency of the process.

The people of Afghanistan have indeed recognized the importance of having strengthened the capacity of State institutions in order to transform the provisions of the Bonn Agreement to reality.

In its effort to further exert and consolidate the authority of the central Government throughout the country, the Government of Afghanistan continues to make significant progress with regard to the formation of the Afghan National Army and Police. The Ministry of Defense, in collaboration with provincial authorities, has made vigorous efforts to form a national army whose composition is based on balanced ethnic and regional representation. The Afghan National Army has thus far demonstrated its effectiveness as it conducts joint military operations with coalition forces against those subversive elements that seek to jeopardize the political transition. We express our appreciation to the Government of the United States of America for its lead role in assisting us in the training of our National Army.

We also owe a debt of gratitude to the Governments of all other friendly countries that also assisted in enhancing our security institutions. We appreciate the engagement of France in assisting the Afghan parliament. Here I remind the Council that the drafting of the Afghanistan Constitution of 1964 took place with the assistance of a Frenchman, Mr. Louis Fougère.

I would also emphasize the continued presence of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan, within the leading role of NATO.

The Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission, established on 6 June 2002, continues to make progress in fulfilling its respective mandate to promote and protect human rights.

Since the launching of the back-to-school programme in 2002, the number of children who have returned to school has increased to more than 4 million. In that context, we extend our gratitude to UNICEF for its continued support in enhancing the capacity of educational institutions in Afghanistan. The

return of a large number of refugees to the country, the restoration of the rights of women — including their participation in the political, civil, economic and social life of the country — the introduction of the new currency and the implementation of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme are other major achievements.

One of the challenges to the Afghan Government remains the security situation in the south and eastern parts of Afghanistan, involving cross-border infiltration by Al-Qaida and the Taliban. The Secretary-General also referred to this issue in paragraph 62 of his report.

In paragraph 82 of the same report the Secretary-General rightfully stated that

> "it is time for the security situation to be addressed resolutely. This requires military action ... The insurgency's sources of funding, training and safe havens must also be effectively addressed."

The Government of Afghanistan remains fully committed in its continuing struggle against the Taliban, Al-Qaida and international terrorism. In this regard, we once again express our sincere appreciation to the international community for its ongoing support.

Combating the production and the cultivation of illegal drugs in Afghanistan is among the top priorities of the Afghan Government. Cognizant of the significant threat posed to the long-term security and stability of the country, the Afghan Government has taken a series of measures aimed at destroying opium and poppy crops.

President Karzai issued two presidential decrees banning the production, trafficking and sale of illegal drugs. He also convened an emergency Loya Jirga, composed of governors, tribal elders and local community leaders who were urged to use their local and social influence to combat cultivation within their jurisdiction. At the meeting, President Karzai also called on participants to wage a holy war against the cultivation of and the trafficking in narcotics. Furthermore, in the course of the past two months, President Karzai has chaired the deliberations of the Committee on Counter-Narcotics, in which members of the cabinet and major donors reviewed progress on the eight pillars — which I shall soon list — of the Afghan Government's counter-narcotics implementation plan.

The most recent and significant measure taken by the Afghan Government to combat the scourge of narcotics was the establishment of the Ministry of Counter-Narcotics. As mentioned in the report of the Secretary-General, the Ministry of Counter-Narcotics has adopted a comprehensive implementation plan consisting of the key pillars of institution-building, information campaigns, alternative sustainable livelihoods for farmers, interdiction and law enforcement, criminal justice, eradication, demand reduction and regional cooperation. The Afghan Government has also established a special tribunal to punish those associated with the production, cultivation and trafficking of illegal drugs.

We remain committed to cooperating closely with all regional and international efforts to combat the cultivation, production, trafficking and consumption of illicit drugs. In that regard, we express our gratitude to the Government of the United Kingdom, which, as the lead nation, is working closely with Afghan authorities, donors and the United Nations to integrate provincial anti-drug activities and identify quick-impact and long-term alternative livelihood programmes and infrastructure projects. The social and economic development of Afghanistan, in particular the development of sustainable and gainful alternative livelihoods, will have a positive impact on reducing poppy cultivation.

We are of the view that the economic recovery and the reconstruction of Afghanistan and the security and the improvement of the lives of the Afghan people are closely interrelated. Providing services, building roads and creating jobs could have a great impact on reducing insecurity and illicit activities, including poppy cultivation and related crimes. The consolidation of peace and security largely depends on the international community's sustained engagement in providing the necessary assistance for the rehabilitation and the reconstruction of Afghanistan.

Since June 2005, the Afghan Government has been in negotiations with UNAMA on the role of the United Nations after the parliamentary elections. The Organization's sustained engagement and support is required in coming years for the rehabilitation and the reconstruction of the country, as well as for the consolidation of peace and security. That item would be one of the first important subjects to be considered by the next parliament of Afghanistan.

Let me conclude by stating that the people of Afghanistan remain enthusiastic about the political transition since the Bonn Agreement. As evidenced during the presidential elections of October 2004, they will defy all acts of intimidation by those acting against the political process. I would also like to recall that in the past Afghanistan has held national and parliamentary elections and that the elections of September 2005 are the first to take place with the assistance of the United Nations.

The Afghan delegation is quite satisfied with the draft presidential statement and appreciates the tireless efforts of the Japanese Mission on this matter.

Mr. Sen (India): Please allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of August. I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate Greece for its successful conduct of the Council presidency in July. At this juncture, I would also like to thank Mr. Arnault, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, for his comprehensive briefing and to congratulate him and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) on their valuable work in the fulfilment of their mandate in Afghanistan.

It has been a year since the Council last held an open debate on Afghanistan. I wish to take this opportunity to thank you, Mr. President, for scheduling this open debate on a critical issue that is so vital for the future of Afghanistan, regional security and, indeed, international security, particularly in the context of the struggle against terrorism. Needless to say, this issue therefore continues to require the most careful attention of the international community.

In his latest report on Afghanistan, of 12 August 2005 (S/2005/525), the Secretary-General concluded that the Bonn process had enjoyed some remarkable achievements, in particular the transition to elected political institutions. He correctly attributed those achievements to the steadfastness of the Afghan people as they struggle to emerge from the devastation of more than two decades of war. Indeed, under President Karzai's leadership, the Afghan Government has made commendable progress since the Bonn Agreement of December 2001. President Karzai's re-election was a manifestation of the strong desire of Afghans to participate in their country's political process.

The international community now looks forward to the successful conclusion of the forthcoming parliamentary and provincial elections next month, which will mark a successful conclusion to the formal Bonn process. We are confident that the present democratic process in Afghanistan will lead to the establishment of a strong and vibrant parliament that will be able to play its due role in the development of the country. India has been privileged to be associated with the construction of the Afghan parliament building, which will be a symbol of the friendship and cooperation between the two countries.

Unfortunately, as pointed out by the Secretary-General in his report (S/2005/525), the completion of the political transition is a vital step, but that alone is not enough. The Secretary-General drew attention to the fact that Afghanistan today — especially in the south and in parts of the east — is suffering from a level of insecurity not seen since the departure of the Taliban. The Permanent Representative of Afghanistan also pointedly referred to relevant paragraphs of the report. In addition, the Secretary-General drew attention to the rising level of insurgency in the country and to the sophistication of the insurgents' weaponry. While pointing out that the country's southern region and parts of its eastern region have borne the brunt of the recent upsurge in violence, the Secretary-General expressed particular concern about the growing influence of non-Afghan elements in the security environment. He reported that attacks by extremist elements — including those claiming allegiance to the Taliban and Al-Qaida — take place on an almost daily basis. As the Secretary-General pointed out, the Taliban and the Hezb-Islami-Gulbuddin Hekmatyar group are not autonomous operations, their external sources of support must be tackled, and the insurgency's sources of funding, training and safe haven must also be effectively addressed. The successes achieved so far in the security sector have included the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme and the containment of factional clashes, which has become a localized issue and is no longer a threat to national security.

The continuing external support for extremist elements is aimed at undermining the central authority of the Afghan Government, as the incidents of violence prevent the expansion of State authority, hinder reconstruction efforts and stall the democratic process. The presidential elections of October 2004 clearly showed that, given the necessary will, such cross-border terrorism can be controlled and contained. A

statement made yesterday by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) provides the troubling assessment that, despite the positive impact of campaigning and voter registration ahead of Afghanistan's parliamentary and provincial elections, the threat of violent attacks could have an impact on the process. It is clear that these extremist elements and their sponsors have decided to attack soft targets such as candidates, election officers, aid workers, local religious leaders and others. It appears that the elections are not the only target of these groups, their objective being the long-term destabilization of Afghanistan. The tap that controls the influx of extremist elements must not only be closed for the forthcoming parliamentary elections; it must be shut off for good.

We are in full agreement with the assessment, made by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan in his briefing to the Security Council in June 2005 (see S/PV.5215), that the international response to thwart the destabilization strategy cannot be limited to combat operations on the ground. It is necessary to resolutely attack the financing of terrorists, the safe havens where they are trained and the networks that support them. The recent bombings in London highlighted once again the international ramifications of terrorist networks and the infrastructure sustaining them.

The international presence in Afghanistan provided by the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and the United States-led coalition forces may be required at this stage, but we feel that to address threats to national security, both internal and external, indigenous Afghan security structures should be put in place as early as possible. In collaboration with the Afghan Government and international partners, India is ready to provide any assistance that will help speed up the rebuilding of the Afghan National Army and National Police force. India remains fully supportive of efforts to expand and consolidate the authority of the central Government throughout Afghanistan. The enormous task of rebuilding Afghanistan can be achieved only through united efforts by the Afghan leadership and the Afghan people.

Afghanistan remains the largest opium-producing country in the world, providing nearly 87 per cent of the world's supply. That accounted for an estimated 60 per cent of Afghanistan's 2004 gross domestic product. Drug trafficking is feeding criminal and terrorist activities. A continued increase in the cultivation, production and trafficking of narcotic drugs could undermine the political and economic reconstruction of Afghanistan and would have potentially dangerous repercussions for the region and beyond. In response to a request by the United Kingdom — the lead nation in tackling the drug problem — for contributions to the recently established Counter-Narcotics Trust Fund, India is exploring the possibility of taking up a pilot project on a community development programme to wean farmers away from poppy cultivation.

As part of the international effort, India is committed to supporting the economic rehabilitation and reconstruction of Afghanistan. The current commitment of India, as the sixth-largest donor country supporting Afghanistan's reconstruction, exceeds $500 million — a substantial amount for a non-traditional donor like India. Of that amount, projects amounting to $480.82 million have already been operationalized or completed. To save time, I will not go into the details of those projects, but will mention only the inclusion of a vital element of infrastructure: the construction of a 220-kilowatt double-circuit transmission line from Pul-e-Khumri to Kabul and a substation at Kabul, the reconstruction of roads and the Salma Dam power project, and the provision of aircraft. In addition, India, in partnership with the Afghan Government, has undertaken projects in virtually all parts of Afghanistan covering a very wide range of sectors, including, as I said, hydroelectricity and road construction, but also agriculture, industry, telecommunications, information and broadcasting, education and health.

The emergence of a strong, democratic and prosperous Afghanistan is essential for peace and stability in the region and beyond. In a few days, the Prime Minister of India, Mr. Manmohan Singh, will be visiting Afghanistan in an endeavour to strengthen and support democracy and economic growth in all possible ways. As the Prime Minister has stated, "We have had historic links and relations with Afghanistan. It is our desire to see Afghanistan prosperous and strong."

The President: I now call on the representative of Spain.

Mr. Yáñez-Barnuevo (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Spanish delegation is grateful, Mr. President, that

today's open debate on Afghanistan is being held under your expert guidance. We wish you every success in the presidency of the Security Council this month.

I wish to thank Mr. Arnault, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, for the comprehensive briefing he has just given us and for his tireless work as Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA).

Spain fully subscribes to the statement made by the representative of the United Kingdom on behalf of the European Union.

I should like, first and foremost, to pay a heartfelt tribute to the 17 Spanish soldiers who, in an air accident near Herat on 16 August, gave their lives helping to defend freedom and peace in Afghanistan. We are deeply grateful for all the expressions of condolence that we have heard today in this Chamber, including from the representative of Afghanistan himself, whom we thank very much. I wish also to remember the other 62 Spanish soldiers who were killed in an air accident in May 2003 as they were returning home after participating in the international peace mission in Afghanistan.

From the very beginning, Spain has been present in Afghanistan, within the framework of the operations authorized by the Security Council, to help safeguard the lives, freedom and prosperity of a people that for decades had endured tyranny and violence and that now, with the assistance of the international community, looks forward with hope to the prospect of peaceful coexistence.

The Government of Spain, with the ongoing support of parliament, is committed, in a lasting manner, to the stabilization and rebuilding of Afghanistan now and during the new phase that will begin shortly, after the elections scheduled for 18 September. To that end, Spain has taken charge of the Forward Support Base at Herat and established a provincial reconstruction team at Qal'eh-ye Now in the west of the country, with more than 500 military personnel and a civilian and cooperation component.

The parliamentary and provincial elections of 18 September constitute one of the most important challenges that the Afghan authorities will face in the short term. In this regard, we are especially concerned about the worsening of the security situation in various areas of the country. We are concerned in particular — and here we fully agree with the observation made by the Secretary-General in his report — about the increase in intimidation and violence perpetrated by radical terrorism. We must not allow it to prevail against the fully expressed will of the Afghan people.

To that end, Spain has already deployed an additional military contingent of 500 military personnel in the region of Herat for a period of three months to support the electoral process. That brings our current military presence in Afghanistan to about 1,000 personnel. At the same time, the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation has pledged more than 1.5 million euros for electoral assistance, to be channeled through the United Nations Development Programme. Likewise, Spain has contributed a significant number of observers to the European Union's Electoral Observation Mission.

There is no doubt that Afghanistan is a State with a key role in the international struggle against terrorism, based on democracy, respect for human rights and the rule of law and the central role of the United Nations.

As the Secretary-General rightly states in his report, with the conclusion of the Bonn political process after the September elections, a new chapter will begin in which the presence and the assistance of the international community will remain essential in the rebuilding and development of Afghanistan, whose authorities will, of course, have to gradually take on greater responsibilities. Furthermore, the donor community and the Afghan Government will have to focus attention increasingly on aspects such as the economic and social development of the country, the building of State institutions, the promotion of human rights, including the situation of women, and the reform of the administration and the justice system.

In that respect, Spain intends, from the beginning of September, to include in the provincial reconstruction team at Qal'eh-ye Now a civilian component composed of an international cooperation team headed by an ambassador on special mission, with a view to working together with the Afghan authorities to develop projects focusing initially on improving health conditions, access to water and basic infrastructure.

At the same time, with regard to efforts to combat drug trafficking, we have established channels of cooperation with the criminal justice programmes

being developed by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, again in cooperation with the Afghan authorities.

Spain undertakes to contribute actively, together with its European Union partners, to discussions on and the development of the new Kabul process, in which the United Nations will no doubt have to continue to play a leadership role in international context. We therefore await with great interest the recommendations and proposals of the Secretary-General in that regard, as well as the guidelines that the Security Council may develop.

The President: The next speaker on my list is the representative of Germany, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Trautwein (Germany): At the outset, I should like to thank you, Mr. President, for having convened this meeting, which is taking place at a crucial point for the people of Afghanistan.

My delegation fully associates itself with the statement delivered by the representative of the United Kingdom as the presidency of the European Union.

I would like to express condolences to our Spanish friends and partners, who lost 17 of their brave peacekeepers in a terrible accident.

Since the conclusion of the Bonn Agreement in December 2001, my country has constantly contributed to the international community's efforts towards the stabilization and reconstruction of Afghanistan as a country ruled by democratic principles.

Today, we note with great satisfaction the achievements of the Bonn process, in particular the successful transition to elected political institutions, as stated in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2005/525). This process will be completed in mid-September with the holding of parliamentary and local elections. We appreciate that progress, and in view of experiences in others regions, we must not take it for granted.

Germany also acknowledges the prominent role played by the United Nations since 2001 and its outstanding work and that of its mission in Afghanistan. The United Nations commitment in that regard has been and will remain a key element on the road to a democratic and stable Afghanistan.

We are nevertheless aware of the challenges lying ahead for the post-Bonn process. They include the security sector, institution-building and the rule of law and the suppression of drug production and trafficking. These challenges will require further commitment on the part of the international community, working in close cooperation with the Afghan Government. We therefore welcome talks between the Afghan Government and the United Nations on the post-Bonn agenda.

As to our own national contributions, I should like to point out that Germany has committed another 320 million euros for economic reconstruction from 2005 to 2008. Today, we provide the largest military contingent to the International Security Assistance Force — currently, 2,200 soldiers — and have recently taken over the task of the Force's Regional Area Coordinator in the north of Afghanistan. We continue to run two provincial reconstruction teams in Kundus and Faisabad. Germany is the lead nation for the Afghan police force as part of the security sector reform.

The suppression of the cultivation of and trade in drugs — which has a heavy impact on the economy, the security sector and institution-building — will remain a major cross-sector challenge. We are seeking ways and means to address this issue, together with the United Kingdom lead and other partners.

The President: The next speaker on my list is the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Zarif (Islamic Republic of Iran): I would like to begin by congratulating you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Council and to congratulate your predecessor on his able leadership. We also want to thank you for having convened this important debate on the situation in Afghanistan. This is an issue in which not only the Afghan people and Afghanistan's neighbouring countries, but also the entire international community, have an enormous stake.

Let me join previous speakers in expressing our thanks and appreciation to the Secretary-General for his valuable report and to his Special Representative, Mr. Arnault, for his comprehensive briefing on recent developments in Afghanistan. Indeed, the efforts and dedication of the Secretary-General and Mr. Arnault deserve our profound admiration and support. We firmly believe that such commitment is indispensable

in the striving of the Afghan people and Government for peace, security and development.

Allow me, Mr. President, to join other colleagues before me in extending our sympathy on the loss of 17 Spanish peacekeepers in the recent tragic helicopter crash.

After successfully meeting several benchmarks set by the Bonn Agreement, the Afghan people and Government are resolutely heading towards another major milestone by preparing for timely, fair and free parliamentary and provincial council elections in September. Despite the enormity of the task, we are confident that the Afghan people, ably led by President Karzai and benefiting from international and regional assistance, will be capable of bringing the process to a successful conclusion. The Islamic Republic of Iran stands ready, as always, to extend its unreserved cooperation to the Government of Afghanistan in the successful holding of these elections.

The recent report of the Secretary-General on Afghanistan (S/2005/525) refers to the progress made and reforms planned in the economic and social fields, particularly in public administration, fiscal management and the national education system. Indeed, the Afghan people and Government deserve our collective admiration for their achievements.

However, despite these commendable efforts and achievements, there is no room for complacency, and much remains to be done, since major daunting challenges still lie ahead. Different hurdles in the way of economic and developmental progress in Afghanistan, including, inter alia, a pervasive drug economy, coupled with the onus of terrorism and violent insurgency, have burdened the reconstruction of the country with a truly formidable combination of challenges. The host of problems that Afghanistan is facing in these fields, if left unchecked, may disrupt the smooth return of the country to peace and stability.

Indeed, the completion of the political transition is a vital step, but, as mentioned in the Secretary-General's report, that alone will not be sufficient for the establishment of lasting peace in Afghanistan. It will certainly require a long-term commitment on the part of the international community to see the process of economic development, along with the reconstruction and rehabilitation of Afghanistan, to a successful conclusion. By the same token, we support the Secretary-General's idea that the international donor community must resist the temptation to move on after the elections are held.

As the Secretary-General mentioned in his report, the security situation in Afghanistan remains of paramount concern. Since security is a prerequisite to ensuring development in the political and economic reconstruction of the country, my Government is concerned about the increase in insurgency and terrorist threats in Afghanistan, particularly in the southern and south-eastern parts of the country, mostly posed by the remnants of the Taliban and Al-Qaida, as well as by drug traffickers.

We believe that in combating the elements of disorder in Afghanistan, priority should be given to enhancing the capabilities of the Afghan National Army and Police and the expansion of the authority of the central Government across the country. That is the best way to provide security throughout Afghanistan and help contain the terrorist threat.

In our view, the impact of a pervasive drug economy on the reconstruction of Afghanistan, and the fact that terrorism and insurgency feed on drug trafficking, should always be kept in sight. Undoubtedly, insecurity and drug trafficking in Afghanistan are mutually reinforcing, while at the same time both exacerbate other forms of transnational crime.

Moreover, opium cultivation in Afghanistan jeopardizes regional stability and adversely affects social order in the neighbouring countries. We fully agree with the Secretary-General that the widespread availability of drugs tends to increase local and regional addiction rates, thus contributing to the spread of diseases such as AIDS throughout the country and the larger region.

Situated on the smuggling route from Afghanistan to Europe and beyond, Iran has done much more than its share to fight a costly war against heavily armed drug traffickers in the last two decades, losing, inter alia, close to 3,400 law enforcement personnel in the process. Nonetheless, we are ready to stay at the forefront of the worldwide war against drugs. We have cooperated sincerely with the international community in fighting opium cultivation in Afghanistan and have, moreover, tried to promote and implement crop substitution projects in different parts of the country.

Despite all the sincere efforts undertaken by the Afghan Government, assisted by the international

community, to combat the scourge of narcotic drugs, we cannot conceal the fact that our expectations have yet to be met. While certain efforts by the Government of Afghanistan have resulted in the reduction of opium cultivation in some regions traditionally famous for producing opium, it is beyond comprehension as to why at the same time opium cultivation should increase in the regions bordering my country, especially in the Farah province. It is a development that arouses our grave concern.

Correspondingly, despite our costly campaign, we have witnessed an increase in drug trafficking from Afghanistan over the past year. For Iran to sustain its ongoing fierce fight against drug trafficking, international support, especially the cooperation of neighbouring countries, is indispensable. There is a pressing need to send an unequivocal message that all States are united in the face of this threat.

Because opium cultivation has turned into a major source of income for many Afghan farmers, we believe that the major cure lies in accelerating the pace of Afghan reconstruction in all fields. Thus the international community should also redouble its efforts in providing international assistance for the reconstruction of Afghanistan. By pledging at the Tokyo Conference to allocate a credit amounting to $560 million to this end — the highest pledge in terms of per capita income of the donor countries — Iran is actively playing a role. In fulfilling our pledge, we have engaged in various infrastructure activities in Afghanistan, including electricity projects, road construction, manpower training and humanitarian services.

In general, Iran's contribution to the reconstruction of Afghanistan has so far amounted to $170 million. At the same time, we are also engaged in many projects, both in Iran and Afghanistan, to help promote foreign trade in this landlocked country. I will not go into the details in the sake of time.

The Islamic Republic of Iran hosted almost 3 million Afghan refugees for about three decades, incurring huge costs in the process. Our expectation that in the new era, and with the cooperation of the international community and the Afghan Government, the voluntary repatriation of the refugees could occur in a more timely manner has yet to be met. Despite the implementation of the Trilateral Agreement signed with the Afghan Government and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the implementation of several programmes in this respect, the process is not progressing satisfactorily. In our view, it is important that the Afghan Government and the international community adopt a more thorough approach to creating a stable basis to facilitate the voluntary return of refugees.

I should not close my statement without reaffirming our determination to continue helping the Afghan Government and people overcome the huge challenges they still face and to move smoothly through the remaining stages of their political, developmental and reconstruction process. The international community should also foster closer and broader cooperation, under the auspices of this world Organization, towards the consolidation of peace, security and stability in Afghanistan.

The President: The next speaker on my list is the representative of Canada, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Rock (Canada): Canada is grateful for the opportunity to participate in this discussion on the situation in Afghanistan, and we are grateful to the presidency of Japan for putting this matter on the agenda.

At the outset, may I say that Canada's commitment to Afghanistan has been significant. We have committed over $600 million through 2009 in development assistance. We have doubled our embassy contingent. We have been and we remain a significant contributor to the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) mission. In fact, we recently augmented our presence in Afghanistan by sending the first contingent of a provincial reconstruction team in Kandahar, which will eventually include both civilian and military components. This deployment in Kandahar, I might say, will eventually number 1,500 persons, which we expect to be in place by February 2006.

The shared objective of the international community and the Afghan people is the creation of a stable, democratic, self-sustaining Afghan State that can provide for its own security and that will never again serve as a haven for international terrorism. Afghanistan has made significant progress on the path towards those goals. It is now at a stage where democracy has taken root and is paying dividends, in particular in terms of building the confidence and the pride of Afghans in their own country. Both the

adoption of a Constitution and the presidential election last October were watersheds in Afghanistan's transition, and key elements of the Bonn Agreement.

While Canada acknowledges that the challenges that continue to confront Afghanistan are serious, we do not believe that they are insurmountable. Let me address four challenges that we believe must be resolved on a priority basis: first, uncooperative local commanders; secondly, governance; thirdly, past injustices; and, fourthly, strategic coordination.

First, with respect to commanders, it seems to us that we can no longer defer facing some of the most difficult problems, including how to deal with local commanders who continue to challenge the authority of the central Government by pursuing illicit activities. Those non-compliant power brokers must be made aware that there are consequences to their actions. Their continued involvement with narcotics, illegal armed groups and human rights violations must be addressed. Without a commitment to take decisive action against those who most overtly defy the rule of law, they will continue to subvert our best efforts and contribute to instability.

The security situation in Afghanistan remains fragile. Al-Qaida, elements of the Taliban and other insurgents are still active, compromising both Afghan and international security. Canada remains concerned about persistent violence directed at civilian populations and at humanitarian and development agencies. We call on all actors to ensure respect for international human rights law and humanitarian law.

On the second subject, governance, we agree with the conclusions reached by the Secretary-General in his report on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security (S/2005/525). Canada firmly believes that building institutions and lasting capacity is the only way to ensure that our investment will endure long beyond our engagement.

Thirdly, with regard to transitional justice, the confidence of the citizenry is key to any Government's success. The inclusion in the Government of individuals responsible for serious past transgressions of Afghan and international law would call into question the credibility of the Government, complicating efforts towards future progress. Canada therefore supports the work being done by Afghan authorities in close cooperation with the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission to develop a national strategy on transitional justice. We are pleased that the strategy contemplates a wide spectrum of mechanisms to address past injustices, ranging from vetting the public service to ending impunity.

The fourth challenge is strategic coordination. Recognizing that the pillars of the security sector are interdependent and mutually reinforcing, and that shortcomings in one pillar will jeopardize the sustainability of progress in another, we must increase strategic coordination. Canada is committed to assisting in the facilitation of that coordination.

(*spoke in French*)

Given those challenges, it is important that we give sufficient attention to charting the path ahead. We should expand the vision of the Bonn Agreement. After all, its goals — national reconciliation, lasting peace, stability and respect for human rights — have yet to be fully realized.

The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan and the Government of Afghanistan have cooperated in the development of the Kabul process, which will result in the achievement of an agreement between Afghanistan and the international community that identifies reciprocal responsibilities. That will be an opportunity to focus on setting goals to provide for security-sector reform; promote and protect human rights, especially the rights of women; establish a sound legal framework that includes access to justice for all Afghans; create accountable governance institutions; and agree upon a strategy for economic development and investment that can promote long-term economic growth in the country.

(*spoke in English*)

In sum, Canada supports the Secretary-General's vision for future engagement in Afghanistan, in particular the continued role for both the United Nations and the international community in consolidating peace. In order for the United Nations to continue to be successful in coordinating donor engagement, it will need to upgrade its capabilities on the ground in Afghanistan in the areas of governance, the rule of law, the police, justice and the private sector. Canada will continue to stand with Afghanistan and the international community and the United Nations as Afghanistan works to take its place among stable, democratic and self-sufficient States.

The President: The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Pakistan, on whom I now call.

Mr. Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry (Pakistan): Let me first discharge the pleasant duty of congratulating you, Mr. President, on the skilful manner in which you are guiding the work of the Security Council during this month. I would also like to take this opportunity to extend to the Permanent Representative of Greece and the rest of the Greek delegation our congratulations on their successful presidency of the Council last month.

We appreciate the holding of this open debate as yet another important juncture in Afghanistan's march towards peace and stability. I would like to thank Mr. Jean Arnault, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for his informative briefing. This meeting offers a good opportunity to review progress towards the objectives of the Bonn process, especially the culminating step of the parliamentary and provincial council elections that will take place next month.

Pakistan shares the concern over increased insecurity in Afghanistan, the causes of which are several and complex. As a United States official stated to *The Financial Times* on 6 June 2005,

> "Last year the order of concern for security in Afghanistan was Taliban, Al-Qaida, warlords, drugs. This year, it's going to be: drugs, warlords, Al-Qaida, Taliban".

The Secretary-General's report (S/2005/525) outlines a number of remaining challenges in the fields of security, institution-building, security-sector reform, the reintegration component of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programme, counter-narcotics, public-sector and civil-service reform, reconstruction and infrastructure development, socio-economic recovery and uplift and the provision of basic services to the Afghan people.

We need a comprehensive strategy for success in Afghanistan that addresses the security, political, economic and social objectives of Afghanistan. The Secretary-General's report observes, inter alia, that

> "Security, effective institutions and development will require time and concerted efforts, to build upon the political achievements of the past three and a half years". (*S/2005/525, para. 81*)

The report also states that

> "Even without the burden of violent insurgency, the reconstruction of Afghanistan faces a truly formidable combination of challenges, including the pervasive drug economy [and] some of the worst social and economic indicators in the world". (*para. 84*)

Apart from Afghanistan itself, no country has a more vital stake in the establishment of peace, security and prosperity in that country than Pakistan. Peace in Afghanistan is essential for the tranquillity and development of Pakistan's own border regions. Peace will enable the nearly 3 million Afghan refugees who remain on our soil after 20 years, virtually without international support, to return to their homes voluntarily and in dignity and honour. Peace and economic revival in Afghanistan will accelerate the already burgeoning trade and economic cooperation between Pakistan and Afghanistan. And peace in Afghanistan will open up the shortest transit routes for trade, energy, raw materials and goods between Central Asia, South Asia and the rest of the world, with enormous economic benefits to Afghanistan, Pakistan and all other countries of the region.

There is, therefore, no ambiguity in our commitment to help the Government of Afghanistan and the international coalition in restoring security and achieving the other agreed goals of the Bonn process. Cross-border traffic is one, but not the major, element in Afghanistan's insecurity matrix. Pakistan is making an enormous effort. We have mounted a determined campaign to eliminate Al-Qaida and Taliban elements on our side of the border. We have captured over 700 of them, the highest number captured by any country.

As President Musharraf observed a few days ago, as a result of our efforts, Al-Qaida's command and control structure has been broken and largely dismantled. That terrorist movement now operates largely through splinter cells in many countries. We have deployed 75,000 troops, for the first time in history, in the frontier tribal areas of Pakistan, for pacification and interdictions, largely with the concurrence of the tribes involved. Seven hundred posts have been established along the border; 4,000 troops are being added for interdiction duties in the run up to the Afghan parliamentary elections. I might mention that our troop strength on the border is higher than the combined strength of the national and international military presence within Afghanistan. We are therefore disappointed that these great efforts,

which are being made by Pakistan at considerable sacrifice of human and financial means, have not been mentioned in the report of the Secretary-General.

The effort to prevent the two-way flow of Al-Qaida, Taliban, tribal or criminal fighters is a cooperative endeavour among Pakistan, Afghanistan and the United States forces in Afghanistan, and is promoted, inter alia, through the Tripartite Commission. In particular, Pakistan relies on aerial and electronic real-time intelligence from the United States side to succeed in interdiction operations, for which we have created a rapid reaction force.

Pakistan supports the continuation of the presence of the United States and International Security Assistance Forces (ISAF) in Afghanistan until peace and stability are fully restored there and until a viable Afghan National Army can assume full responsibility for the country's security. Most of the coalition's fuel, food and other supplies come from Pakistan. Thus, those who raise doubts about Pakistan's commitment to peace and security in Afghanistan, often by exaggerating the threat of cross-border movements, are those who wish to find excuses for their own failure, or those — some of whom we have heard here — who wish to poison relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Pakistan's relations with Afghanistan have improved considerably and have become diversified. They are marked by the frequent exchange of high-level visits; progressive institutionalization; record levels of transit trade, which has doubled in the last three years; bilateral trade, which is now more than $1.2 billion; and our active participation in the reconstruction of Afghanistan.

During the visit of our Prime Minister to Kabul in July 2005, a number of economic cooperation programmes were agreed upon, including the announcement by Pakistan of additional assistance of $100 million for Afghan reconstruction. Those funds will be utilized in consultation with Afghan authorities on projects prioritized by the Afghans. Of the $100 million pledged earlier by Pakistan at the Tokyo Conference, almost $50 million has already been utilized for humanitarian assistance, projects in infrastructure, health, education and transport, and capacity-building of State institutions. The remaining amount has been allocated for several hospitals in different cities and for faculty blocks in universities, as well as for the Chaman-Spin Boldak rail track.

In the context of institution-building, Pakistan is also providing training to Afghan officials in several fields including diplomacy, judiciary, police, counter-narcotics, agriculture, customs and banking.

As the Secretary-General notes in his report, the discussion on the post-election agenda will provide a unique opportunity for a broad dialogue between Afghanistan and the international community, in particular the countries of the region. Pakistan stands ready to play its part in that process and reiterates its full support for durable peace and stability in Afghanistan. We also call on the international community and the United Nations to remain steadfast in their commitment to Afghanistan. In that context, we look forward to the report to be submitted by the Secretary-General on the future role of the United Nations in Afghanistan.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Malaysia.

Mr. Mohd. Radzi (Malaysia): Let me join others, Mr. President, in thanking you for convening this meeting, enabling non-members of the Security Council to participate in the deliberations on the important issue before the Council. We also look forward to open, inclusive and more comprehensive deliberations in the General Assembly on the issues relating to Afghanistan.

Since the Secretary-General's last report in March 2005 (S/2005/183), we are encouraged to note that Afghanistan continues to register relatively impressive progress in the implementation of the Bonn Agreement. Afghanistan is a nation emerging from a long period of armed conflict, and the process of peacebuilding and national reconstruction are not expected to be easy. Nonetheless, we believe that — with the sustained support of the international community and the strong determination of the population to attain peace, and with a functioning Government now in place — many essential measures to further enhance stability and development in the country can be effectively pursued and implemented.

The desired progress having been achieved in Afghanistan, it is important that it be sustained and strengthened. We look forward to further efforts to ensure the success of the parliamentary and provincial

elections that are scheduled to take place on 18 September this year. We welcome the Secretary-General's assurance of continuing commitment to assist the Government of Afghanistan as it continues to address the vital tasks required to fulfil its political, security and development agenda.

While we welcome the encouraging achievements thus far, my delegation fully acknowledges the remaining challenges ahead, which could present serious obstacles to the full recovery of that country. We are concerned to note, in the area of social and economic development for example, that 20 per cent of children in Afghanistan die before the age of 5 and that a woman dies every 30 minutes of pregnancy-related causes. Life expectancy remains, alarmingly, at 44.5 years. The extent of poverty and underdevelopment among the vast majority of the population can be left to our imagination. It remains clear to us that the question of development must be given serious attention when the issues of security, illegal drugs and the institution of good governance are addressed.

We noted in the Secretary-General's report (S/2005/525) that in the years since the Bonn Agreement, the Government of Afghanistan has received extensive assistance from the international community. The United Nations too has played a key role in responding to many humanitarian crises. Nonetheless, given the prevailing fragile situation in Afghanistan, my delegation wishes to urge the international community and the United Nations to continue their support for the Government of Afghanistan in its endeavour to overcome the challenges remaining in the essential areas of nation-building. More efforts must be made to assist Afghanistan to explore and develop its economic and trade potential. International assistance in the field of education, including the development of relevant infrastructure, human resource training and development, is one important area requiring greater emphasis in the national development agenda.

The coming parliamentary elections, to be held in September 2005, constitute a crucial event that, hopefully, will mark the completion of the political transition towards national reconciliation and stability in Afghanistan. However, my delegation shares the view that the security situation in Afghanistan must be effectively addressed prior to the parliamentary elections. My delegation believes that the Afghan people's participation, enthusiasm, support and, most important, their will to achieve peace and development will make the coming electoral process possible, in a peaceful and orderly environment. The Government, assisted by the international community, must continue its efforts to promote and build the confidence and the trust of the people in a secure and peaceful environment.

Malaysia also noted in the report of the Secretary-General that in 2005 the narcotic drug eradication effort was not as successful as expected. In that regard, we believe that the international community must play its role in extending close cooperation and in assisting the Government of Afghanistan in its efforts to substantially decrease the drug trade in the near future, with a view to its total eradication in the long term. We believe that, in addition to genuine and sustainable national efforts, international cooperation is essential for effectively combating illicit drug cultivation and trafficking.

Malaysia looks forward to cooperating closely with the Government of Afghanistan in the context of our bilateral relations and stands ready to explore way and means to continue to enhance our relations. Malaysia stands ready to assist and, in this connection, will continue to provide, within our modest capacity, technical assistance and training to Afghanistan in essential areas of nation-building under the Malaysian Technical Cooperation Programme.

In this trying period of national reconstruction, it is clear that Afghanistan requires continuing support from the international community. In spite of the difficulties, the country has been able to accomplish relatively impressive progress in moving forward. We have to acknowledge that the remaining effort will continue to be difficult and challenging. Nonetheless, as we have stated earlier, we are confident that, with assured and sustained support from the international community, the Government and the people of Afghanistan will be able to rebuild the country and strengthen the foundation of constitutional democracy and that Afghanistan will assume its rightful place in the community of nations.

Last but not least, we wish to join others in expressing our appreciation to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Jean Arnault, the relevant United Nations agencies, all the men and women of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan and national Governments for

their remarkable efforts in assisting Afghanistan despite the prevailing difficult and dangerous conditions.

The President: I now call on the representative of Italy.

Mr. Mantovani (Italy): First, I wish to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Jean Arnault, for his instructive briefing and his unwavering commitment to the successful fulfilment of the United Nations mandate in Afghanistan.

Italy fully aligns itself with the statement delivered by the United Kingdom on behalf of the European Union. I also wish to associate myself and my country with the condolences expressed by all delegations on the loss of lives recently suffered by several countries, namely Spain and the United States, as well as among United Nations staff.

We are not used to adding our voice to that of the European Union presidency, but under the current circumstances we feel, in a way, bound to make a few complementary remarks of our own. Actually, Italy's efforts for the stabilization and the reconstruction of Afghanistan, in this particular phase, are not of a "business as usual" kind. They are, indeed, unprecedented for us, as they were recently scaled up exponentially as a response to the latest developments.

The worrying notes contained in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2005/525) reflect the difficult reality on the ground. But that should not frighten us. On the contrary, the daunting challenges lying ahead should strengthen our commitment. Those challenges are related to the three vital and intertwined pillars of security, institution-building and economic development. No effort should be spared in tackling those three pillars in an integrated perspective. In that regard, thanks to the multifaceted responsibilities it has assumed in Afghanistan, Italy is in a privileged position to appraise the benefits that the complementarity of endeavours in the different sectors can bring. As lead country, we are intensifying our efforts to support the plans of the Afghan authorities to reform the justice sector. We remain among the top development partners in terms of financial contributions to priority sectors such as infrastructure, health, education, culture, media, refugee repatriation, demining, counter-narcotics and women's empowerment. We will hold the rotating command of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) for the next nine months, while maintaining command of ISAF Regional Command West and the Herat Provincial Reconstruction Team, which entails, as I speak, the presence of approximately 2,000 Italian soldiers in Afghanistan.

Those commitments have in recent months further stimulated the political dialogue between Afghan and Italian leaders. To mention just the latest occasion, the Italian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs visited Kabul on 4 August on the occasion of the ISAF command takeover, following President Karzai's visit last month to Italy, when a joint declaration was signed on justice sector reform, in which the two countries agreed on its prioritization in the post-electoral agenda.

In his report, the Secretary-General expresses his deep concern at the funding shortfall for the electoral process. As a further sign of our commitment to its success, in response to the urgent appeal for new financial contributions for the parliamentary and local elections, and in spite of our serious budgetary constraints, Italy swiftly decided to allocate a further €1 million, in addition to the €4 million previously disbursed. We urge other potential donors to join in that important endeavour.

On the other hand, we are glad to learn from the report of the Secretary-General that consultations with the Afghan Government on the post-electoral agenda are already under way. We agree on the basic principles of the renewed partnership between Afghanistan and the international community outlined in the report, and we stand ready to contribute further to consultations on the future United Nations mandate. We are convinced that the United Nations cannot but maintain a strong role of leadership and overall coordination of the efforts deployed by the international community.

Finally, let me stress that our strenuous efforts are inspired by nothing but our deep-rooted friendship — I should say brotherhood — with the Afghan people and by our sense of admiration for the courage and resolve of their democratically elected leadership. At the same time, I cannot overemphasize the tremendous relevance of the democratic renaissance of Afghanistan for international peace and security and as a model for peacebuilding policies and actions. We are proud to be part of this historic process, which is now at a crucial crossroads. Let us help the Afghan people to take the correct turn.

The President: I now call on the representative of the Republic of Korea.

Mr. Oh Joon (Republic of Korea): At the outset, let me join previous speakers in thanking you, Mr. President, for convening this open debate on the situation in Afghanistan. We would like to congratulate Japan on its assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of August.

I would also like to express my delegation's condolences for the loss of 17 Spanish peacekeepers in last week's helicopter crash in Afghanistan.

Given that the Afghan people will be holding parliamentary elections on 18 September, today's debate is especially timely. Afghanistan has made significant progress over the past three and a half years. With the establishment of the Afghan Interim Authority in December 2001, the reform measures instituted by the Transitional Administration, the holding of a constitutional Loya Jirga in December 2003 and the first-ever direct presidential election in October 2004, which led to the inauguration of President Hamid Karzai, the foundations have been laid for democracy and a brighter political future. We hope that when the parliamentary and provincial elections are held next month Afghanistan will have met all of the benchmarks set out in the political agenda of the Bonn Agreement of December 2001.

Substantial progress has also been made on the institutional agenda of the Bonn Agreement in such areas as disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR), the establishment of the Afghan National Army, police reform and the establishment of a human rights commission. We are pleased to note that the disarmament and demobilization portion of the DDR programme ended last month with more than 63,000 troops of the Afghan military forces disarmed and that the majority of them entered the reintegration process. That success only reinforces our conviction that the DDR process should be further intensified, with the aim of achieving lasting peace and stability that extends well beyond next month's elections.

My delegation attributes Afghanistan's achievements to the steadfastness of the Afghan people as they struggle to emerge from the devastation of more than two decades of war, as well as to the partnership between the international community and the Afghan Government. We pay tribute to the Afghan people and Government for their resolve to move forward to the successful rebuilding of their country.

The progress so far in Afghanistan, the risks and hard work that the Afghan people and the international community have put into achieving that progress make it all the more vital that we face the remaining challenges squarely. Uppermost in our concerns are continuing violence and terrorism, as exemplified by the roadside bomb attack that took the lives of four United States soldiers and wounded three others only last Sunday. Another major concern is criminal drug trafficking. Those ongoing challenges continue to hamper both reconstruction and the implementation of the Bonn process.

The Republic of Korea has been a strong supporter of the reconstruction, development and stability of Afghanistan. Since February 2002 a medical unit and a reconstruction unit from the Republic of Korea, together totalling more than 200 personnel, have been part of the multinational forces in Afghanistan. In addition, since November 2001 the Republic of Korea has contributed $57 million for emergency relief and reconstruction. The bulk of those funds have gone to building schools, hospitals and vocational training centres, while $500,000 has been dedicated to support for the upcoming election.

The Republic of Korea remains committed to the successful reconstruction of Afghanistan and pledges that its support will continue in the years ahead.

The President: The last speaker on my list is the representative of Turkey, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. İlkin (Turkey): Since this is the first time I have taken the floor in the month of August, allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council and to wish you every success. May I also extend our appreciation to the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report describing the present situation in Afghanistan (S/2005/525). It was indeed enlightening. In addition, I would like to thank the Special Representative, Mr. Jean Arnault, for his briefing today and to commend him and his colleagues for their efforts in trying to promote democracy, peace and stability in Afghanistan.

Turkey has already aligned itself with the statement made a short while ago by the representative of the United Kingdom on behalf of the European

Union. In light of Turkey's deep-rooted historical and friendly ties with Afghanistan, I am taking the floor to highlight a few points with regard to my country's views.

The adoption of the constitution in January 2004 and the holding of direct presidential elections in October 2004 constituted important milestones in the Bonn process and reaffirmed the dedication of the Afghan people to achieving reconciliation, peace and stability in their country and thus in their region. We very much hope that the last benchmark of the Bonn Agreement — the parliamentary and provincial council elections on 18 September — will be held on time and in a secure environment.

As of February 2005, Turkey assumed for the second time the leadership of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) with the participation of a large Turkish military contingent in order to further consolidate peace, tranquillity and law and order in Afghanistan. As stated in the Secretary-General's report, after having fulfilled its mission Turkey handed over the command to Italy on 4 August. However, it is needless to say that Turkey's strong commitment to the security, unity, reconstruction and welfare of Afghanistan will continue unabated. The visit to Afghanistan by the Turkish Prime Minister in April 2005, during our leadership of ISAF, gave our Government the opportunity to confirm its readiness to assist and support Afghanistan in every possible way.

The only option open for Afghanistan is success. Hence, the continued commitment of the international community to the achievement of that goal is essential and will remain so in the months and years to come.

The President: I wish once again to thank both non-members and members of the Security Council for their contributions to today's debate on Afghanistan.

After consultations among members of the Security Council, I have been authorized to make the following statement on behalf of the Council:

> "The Security Council welcomes the progress in the preparations for the parliamentary — Wolesi Jirga — and provincial council elections scheduled for 18 September 2005, including the compilation of the final candidate list and updating of voter registration, and encourages all Afghan participants, especially the candidates and their supporters, to work constructively to ensure that the ongoing electoral campaigns are conducted peacefully, in an environment free of intimidation, and that the elections can be held successfully. The Council calls upon the international community to extend additional financial assistance in order to fill the gap of $29.6 million for these elections.
>
> "The Security Council expresses grave concern about the increased attacks by the Taliban, Al-Qaida and other extremist groups in Afghanistan over the past few months. The Council condemns the attempts to disrupt the political process by terrorist acts or other forms of violence in Afghanistan. The Council, in this regard, endorses the effort of the Afghan Government, with the support of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and the Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) coalition, within their respective responsibilities, to improve the safety and stability of the country.
>
> "The Security Council also stresses the importance of continued cooperation and increased dialogue between neighbouring States and the Afghan Government to promote regional development and the long-term peace and stability of Afghanistan.
>
> "The Security Council notes the progress made to date, in particular in security sector reform, and in this regard welcomes the completion of the disarmament of the Afghan Military Forces (AMF). The Council expresses its strong view that the international community must maintain a high level of commitment to assist Afghanistan in addressing its remaining challenges, including the security situation, disbandment of illegal armed groups, the production and trafficking of drugs, development of Afghan government institutions, acceleration of justice sector reform, promotion and protection of human rights, and sustainable economic and social development.
>
> "The Security Council welcomes the desire of the international community and the Afghan Government to agree a new framework for international engagement beyond the completion of the Bonn political process. The Council expresses, in this regard, its readiness to review, based on the report of the Secretary-General to be

submitted in accordance with its resolution 1589 (2005), and in the light of consultations the United Nations will have with the Government of Afghanistan and all concerned international actors, the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) after the completion of the electoral process, in order to allow the United Nations to continue to play a vital role in the post-Bonn period. The Council is also ready to consider the renewal of the mandate of ISAF prior to its expiration, upon the request of the Government of Afghanistan."

This statement will be issued as a document of the Security Council under the symbol S/PRST/2005/40.

There are no further speakers inscribed on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 1.35 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.5249/Corr.1

Security Council

Sixtieth year

Provisional

5249th meeting

Tuesday, 23 August 2005, 10 a.m.
New York

Corrigendum

Page 30, first column

The name of the representative of Pakistan should be **Mr. Akram**

05-47345 (E)

United Nations S/PV.5250

Security Council

Sixtieth year

Provisional

5250th meeting

Wednesday, 24 August 2005, 10 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Oshima	(Japan)
Members:	Algeria	Mr. Benmehidi
	Argentina	Mr. Mayoral
	Benin	Mr. Zinsou
	Brazil	Mr. Sardenberg
	China	Mr. Cheng Jingye
	Denmark	Mr. Faaborg-Andersen
	France	Mr. Poirier
	Greece	Mr. Vassilakis
	Philippines	Mr. Baja
	Romania	Mr. Dumitru
	Russian Federation	Mr. Konuzin
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Johnston
	United Republic of Tanzania	Mr. Mahiga
	United States of America	Mr. Bolton

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A.

05-47067 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

The President: In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Ibrahim Gambari, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs.

It is so decided.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear a briefing by Mr. Ibrahim Gambari, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, on whom I now call.

Mr. Gambari: Israeli disengagement from Gaza and northern parts of the West Bank, which began on 15 August as announced, overshadowed other Middle East issues in the past month. Despite the dramatic scenes, which we have all seen on television and in newspapers, of Israeli military and police personnel removing settlers from their houses in Gaza, the operation mostly proceeded smoothly and with surprising speed, aided by the restraint generally observed by militant Palestinian factions. The evacuation of Israeli settlers from Gaza was completed on Monday. Evacuation of settlers from the settlements earmarked for removal in the northern West Bank was carried out yesterday. However, the success of the implementation of the operation was marred by the senseless and unprovoked murders of Palestinians, before and during the disengagement, by what Prime Minister Sharon himself has described as Jewish terrorists in the West Bank.

Quartet envoys met last week in Jerusalem to assess the situation and to prepare for the Quartet principals' meeting, which is due to take place on 20 September here at United Nations Headquarters. While the settlers will long since have been evacuated by that time, Israeli military personnel will almost certainly still be in the Gaza Strip, discharging the tasks that remain to be carried out before they withdraw completely, hopefully some time in October. The Secretary-General looks forward to the opportunity to assess with his Quartet partners the progress of withdrawal, as well as to discuss the issues that will be left pending in connection with withdrawal, as outlined by Mr. James Wolfensohn, the Quartet's special envoy for disengagement. The Quartet will also have an opportunity to chart the next steps in pursuance of the vision to which the Quartet remains committed, namely, that of two States, Israel and a sovereign, viable, democratic and contiguous Palestine, living side by side in peace and security.

In four trips to the region before the start of disengagement, Mr. Wolfensohn continued to focus his efforts on resolving six key issues. Those issues are border crossings and trade corridors linking Gaza and the West Bank, movement within the West Bank, the Gaza airport and seaport, the houses in Israeli settlements and the greenhouses in the settlements. On all those issues, coordination between the Israeli and Palestinian sides intensified in the last month and continues to this day. Members of the Council will agree that since those matters are still under discussion, it would not be wise to air them publicly at this time, lest the outcome be jeopardized.

Also with regard to disengagement, on the night of 15 August Prime Minister Sharon delivered a prime time televised address to his people expressing his regret that "changing reality in this country, in this region and in the world" required a reassessment and change of position —because, according to him, "Gaza cannot be held onto forever". In that regard, he alluded to the growth of the Palestinian population there and to their living "in incredibly cramped refugee camps, in poverty and squalor, in hotbeds of ever-increasing hatred, with no hope whatsoever on the horizon".

Israeli soldiers then began operations to remove settlers from Gaza settlements, once the 15 August deadline for settlers to leave had expired. Opponents of the withdrawal have not succeeded in blocking it. The Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) and the Israeli police have carried out the operation efficiently, taking pains to avoid the use of force. They have completed the evacuation of the settlements well in advance of the targeted date.

For its part, the Palestinian Authority renewed its commitment to a smooth and peaceful withdrawal and

to cooperate and coordinate with the Israeli side to that end. On 9 August President Abbas told the Palestinian Legislative Council that "a successful withdrawal and maintaining security is the responsibility of all Palestinians, so that we can show the world we deserve our freedom and our independence". On 14 August a large force of Palestinian police began to deploy in several areas of the Gaza Strip adjacent to Jewish settlements to provide buffer cordons and to deter the firing of home-made rockets and mortars. The Palestinian side's cooperation has been manifest throughout the evacuation.

With regard to security and violence, I would like to report that a spate of kidnappings of foreigners in the Gaza Strip over past months reflects a decline in the internal security situation during the run-up to disengagement. It also illustrates the breadth of the security problem, which extends beyond armed factions to other family-controlled armed groups.

The President of the Palestinian Authority, other high-level officials and community leaders have condemned the kidnappings. The United Nations has therefore been compelled to increase security measures, but the critical humanitarian, emergency and security staff of the United Nations remain in Gaza and all operations and the delivery of services continue unchanged. It is hoped that the Palestinian Authority will implement promised changes and enhancements in the internal security arrangements without any further delay.

On the other hand, the renewed commitment to the ceasefire by Palestinian armed groups has led to a significant reduction in the number of Palestinian attacks on Israeli targets inside the occupied Palestinian territory and Israel, and it facilitated the smooth implementation of the disengagement from Gaza.

United States Security Coordinator General Ward continued his assistance to the Palestinian Authority in putting together the necessary resources to ensure that disengagement went smoothly. There will be a continuing need for international assistance so that over time the goal of a robust Palestinian security sector that ensures that the "one authority, one weapon" policy can be realized.

Amongst the killings in the past month, two incidents were particularly shocking because they took place in the period immediately prior to, and during, the Israeli disengagement. On 4 August, an Israel Defense Forces (IDF) soldier who had deserted from the army to protest the disengagement opened fire on the passengers of a civilian bus in the Arab town of Shfa'Amr, killing four people and injuring at least 12 other passengers.

In a reminiscent act of terror, on 17 August an Israeli killed four Palestinians and wounded two others when he opened fire on a group of Palestinians in the industrial area of the West Bank settlement of Shiloh. The acts in themselves were utterly horrendous and inexcusable. However, those extremists who have used inflammatory language bordering on incitement carry a heavy responsibility for creating the atmosphere in which the attacks took place.

Thus, while Israel's bold first withdrawal from occupied Palestinian territory is welcome, the situation elsewhere in the occupied Palestinian territory continues to fester, with many Palestinians fearing that Israel is consolidating its occupation in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Of concern in that connection are recent statements by Hamas leaders that they will carry their resistance to the West Bank.

In our view, violence as a means to achieve any objective should be rejected. At the same time, it would be unwise to lose sight of the concern of mainstream Palestinians in both Gaza and the West Bank that their legitimate aspirations may be put off indefinitely.

With regard to settlement activity, reports by non-governmental monitoring groups indicate that settlement activity in the West Bank continued during the past month. The Ministry of Housing and Construction has issued tenders for the building of 235 housing units in settlements this year, the majority of which are for location in settlements near metropolitan Jerusalem. On 4 August 2005, the Housing Ministry also issued two tenders for the building of 72 housing units in the settlement of Betar Ilit, which is situated between Jerusalem and the Etzion bloc of settlements in the southern West Bank. In Jerusalem, on 25 July 2005, the Israeli local planning committee of the Jerusalem municipality approved a scheme presented by the Ministry of Housing to construct a new Jewish settlement in the Muslim quarter of Jerusalem's Old City.

In late July 2005, the economic ministerial committee of the Knesset approved a three-year aid

plan to provide 97 million shekels to improve infrastructure, agriculture and settlement expansion in the Jordan Valley area. The project is to be carried out in cooperation with the settlement councils in the area and with the Ministries of Housing and of Finance.

It was reported in the Israeli press that Prime Minister Sharon, in a speech last Sunday, confirmed his intention to continue building in the settlement blocs in the West Bank, ensuring a permanent territorial link between Israel and the Ariel settlement and also uniting the settlement of Ma'aleh Adumim with Jerusalem.

With regard to the issue of barrier construction, settlement expansion cannot be separated from the ongoing construction of Israel's security barrier. Last month, my colleague Alvaro de Soto, the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, reported the approval by the Israeli Cabinet of the remaining details of the route of the barrier around Jerusalem, to be completed in September.

This week, land expropriation orders for approximately 396 acres were issued in the Jerusalem governorate. The orders are for the construction of a portion of the already approved barrier around the Ma'aleh Adumim settlement. That route would cut a reported 23 kilometres into occupied Palestinian territory, and would separate the northern West Bank from the south. Confiscation of land and barrier construction continued during the past month throughout the West Bank.

Furthermore, partly as a consequence of continued barrier construction, which rendered them redundant, there has been a significant reduction of roadblocks and earth mounds in the West Bank. No change in the number of checkpoints was noted, while a significant increase has been noted in the number of mobile, sporadic controls by IDF personnel in military vehicles, known as flying checkpoints. Severe limitations remain on Palestinian movement, and it has yet to be seen whether the reductions significantly palliate the damage that the closure regime inflicts on the depressed Palestinian economy and humanitarian conditions.

Following the 12 July suicide bombing in Netanya, a general closure on the occupied Palestinian territory was imposed by the IDF. Workers and merchants from the West Bank were unable to reach their places of work in East Jerusalem and Israel. The closure is still imposed on the West Bank but was eased for several days for Gaza Strip workers and merchants travelling to Israel, only to be imposed again on 13 August due to the disengagement. Movement of Palestinian males aged between 16 and 35 years through Rafah terminal is permitted only with advance coordination.

I would now like to turn to the issue of elections. President Abbas signed the amendments made to the Palestinian Basic Law on 14 August, pursuant to the amendments to the electoral law adopted by the Palestinian Legislative Council in June. The President recently decreed that the legislative elections would be held on 25 January 2006. The amended law stipulates that the term of the President of the Palestinian Authority is four years. It also stipulates that Palestinian Legislative Council elections will be held every four years.

For its part, the Central Elections Commission has said that it is ready to carry out the legislative election accordingly, in January 2006. The Commission affirmed that is has approved all plans and all arrangements for the electoral campaigns and voting. It also affirmed that more than 80 per cent of eligible voters have registered to vote.

Mobile registration teams have so far registered a total of roughly 90,000 new electors. It is expected that the total number of electors will slightly exceed 1.3 million. The Central Elections Commission is also moving forward with voter education plans related to the new law, especially the new system of representation.

I understand that Council members would like to have a briefing on Lebanon, and that is why I now turn my attention to the situation there. We see that there have been several important developments since the last briefing to the Council.

The security situation in Lebanon continues to be unstable. On 22 August 2005 another explosion occurred in Beirut, injuring several people and causing extensive material damage to buildings in the Zalka suburb. The Secretary-General strongly condemned that act of terrorism. He further supports the efforts of the Government of Lebanon to improve the security situation in the country and that Government to bring to justice to those behind that and other similar acts. The Secretary-General also reiterates his call upon all

parties to continue to work towards a united, sovereign and democratic Lebanon.

On 30 July, the proposed Government of Prime Minister Fuad Siniora received a parliamentary vote of confidence, formally establishing the new Government. The Secretary-General welcomed that important development and the new Government's policy statement, which outlined a number of very challenging yet essential reforms for the country. Shortly after the vote of confidence, the Personal Representative of the Secretary-General for Southern Lebanon, Geir Pedersen, called on senior Government officials, including the President, the Prime Minister and the Speaker, reiterating that the United Nations looked forward to working closely with the new Government, and offering it the assistance of the United Nations, as may be required.

In his discussions with the Government, Mr. Pedersen underscored the importance of beginning a process of planning for the further deployment of the Lebanese Army throughout southern Lebanon, in accordance with the various Security Council resolutions to that effect. The UNIFIL Force Commander, Major General Alain Pellegrini, also met recently with Lebanese leaders. He emphasized the need to uphold the current calm along the Blue Line and to avoid any provocations, especially given the current critical period for the region due to the Gaza disengagement.

On 8 August the Lebanese Government announced the creation of a committee headed by a widely respected Lebanese official, former Foreign Minister Fouad Boutros, to oversee the discussions on the reform of the parliamentary electoral law. We view that as a positive indication of the Government's determination to begin a series of important reform-oriented initiatives for the benefit of all Lebanese. Again, the United Nations and the international community stand ready to support the Government of Lebanon in that regard, as and if requested.

On 29 July the Security Council adopted resolution 1614 (2005), which extended the peacekeeping mandate of UNIFIL by a further six months. Since our last briefing to the Council, the situation along the Blue Line has remained calm but tense. Israeli air violations of the Blue Line and Lebanese airspace have continued, if in reduced numbers.

Israeli disengagement from Gaza and the northern West Bank marks a watershed in that it constitutes the first removal by Israel of settlements on occupied Palestinian territory. Israeli policy has demonstrated that it has the requisite maturity to do what will be required to achieve lasting peace, and the Israel Defense Forces have demonstrated their ability to discharge their mission with carefully calibrated restraint. Prime Minister Sharon should be commended for his determination and courage to carry out the disengagement in the face of forceful and often strident internal opposition.

Under the leadership of President Mahmoud Abbas, the Palestinians are soberly welcoming this important stage in their history. His continued leadership will be needed at a time of rising expectations in Gaza and mounting concerns in the West Bank. We call on all Palestinian factions to eschew violence and pursue their goals through peaceful and democratic means.

While substantial progress has been made in addressing the priority issues earmarked by Mr. Wolfensohn in the framework of disengagement, much work remains to be done and will be required to reach agreement on them. Mr. Wolfensohn has stressed the need to bring about agreement and implementation in order to provide hope and security for the Palestinians and the Israelis. It is critical to concentrate efforts on the revitalization of the Palestinian economy, which has suffered so greatly in recent years.

However, in the aftermath, the picture appears less clear. Real and difficult challenges still lie ahead in forging common ground among the Israelis and the Palestinians as true peace partners.

In conclusion, I would like to say that neither party should be exempt from its road map obligations. President Abbas must take up the difficult challenge of transforming and developing the security sector and must ensure that the Palestinian Authority holds the monopoly on the use of force. We believe that in facing that challenge, President Abbas will need all possible support from his own people, as well as from Israel and the international community. For its part, Israel should freeze all settlement activities in the West Bank. The creation of new facts on the ground, which prejudice final status issues, can but make the search for negotiated solutions far more difficult than it already is.

Therefore, as the disengagement draws to an end, attention must now turn to the aftermath — the so-called day after. It is hoped that this will be at the top of the Quartet's agenda next month. In our view, it will be necessary to bring the process back into the mainstream, which is laid out in the road map, in order to revitalize and realize the vision of two States living alongside each other and to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the region.

The President: I thank Mr. Gambari for his comprehensive briefing.

In accordance with the understanding in the Council's prior consultations, I should now like to invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 10.40 a.m.